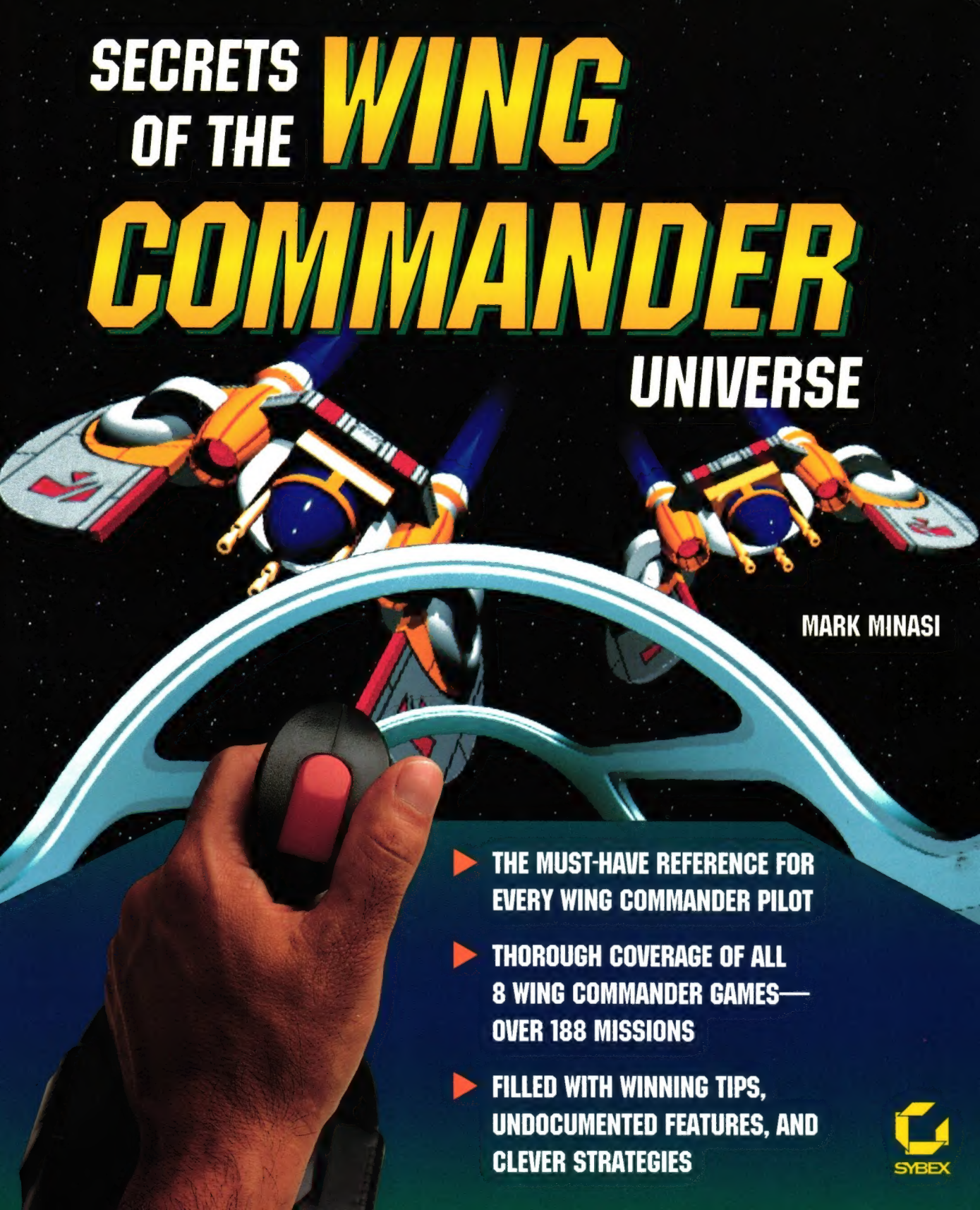


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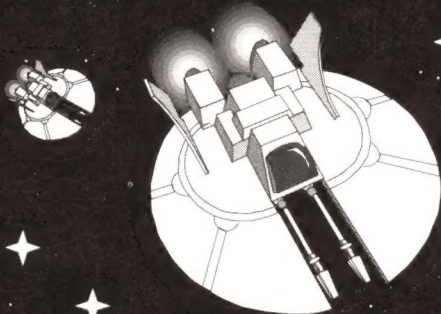


SHIPS

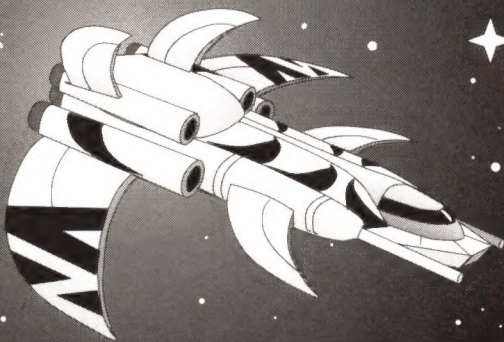
Chapter 2 illustrates the ships you'll meet
in the Wing Commander series.

Kilrathi Ships

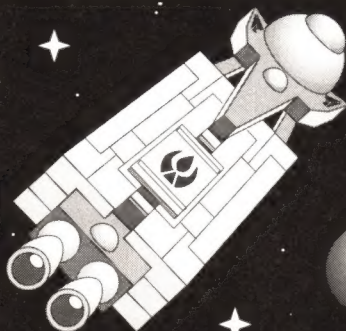
Dralthi



Jalkehi

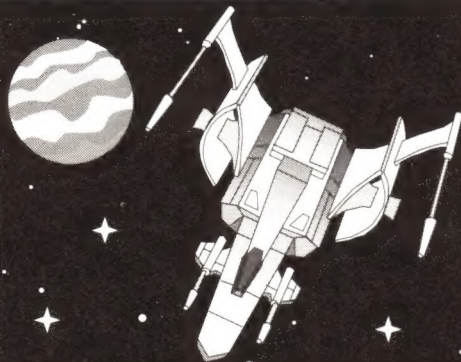


Lumbari

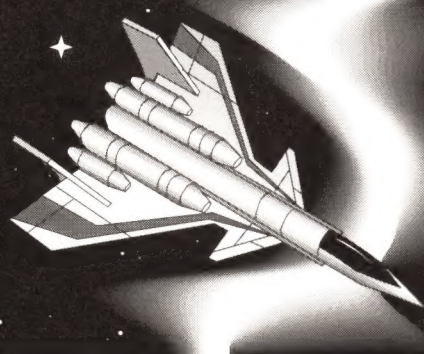


ConFed Ships

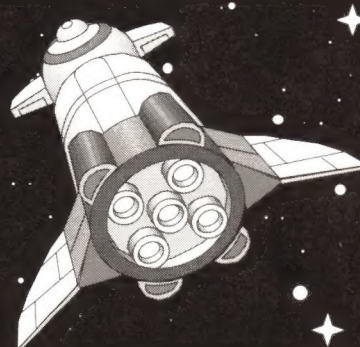
Raptor



Morningstar

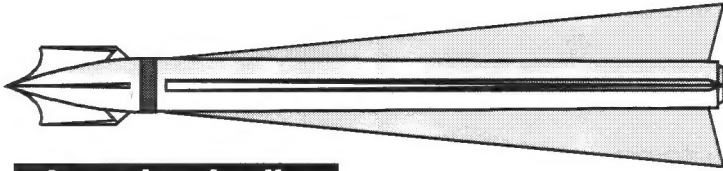


Clydesdale



WEAPONS

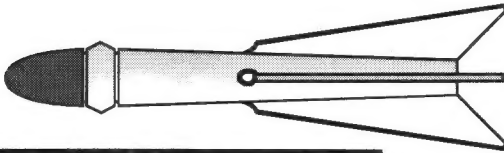
Chapter 3 illustrates the weapons and discusses how to use them.



Leech missile



Porcupine mine



Heat-seeking missile

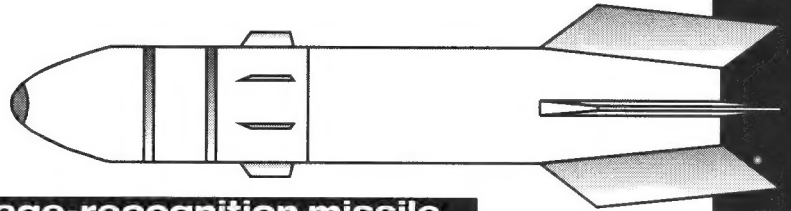
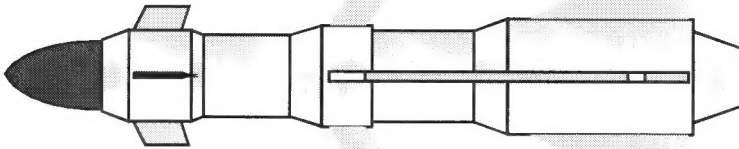


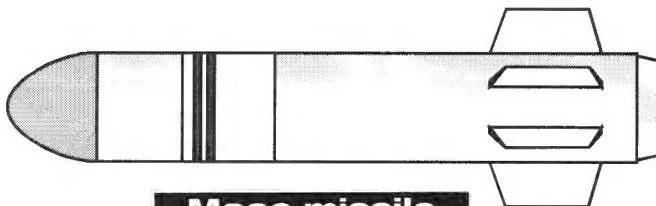
Image-recognition missile



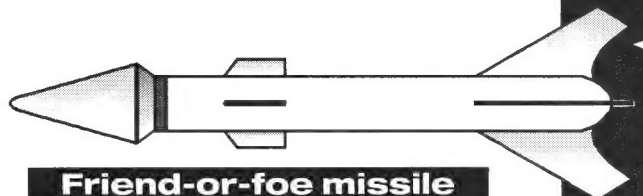
Proton torpedo



Dumb-fire missile



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SECRETS OF THE WING COMMANDER UNIVERSE

MARK MINASI

Illustrated by Elizabeth Creegan



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Library of Congress Card Number: 94-65691
ISBN: 0-7821-1505-5

Manufactured in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1



To Ludwig Braun, the professor of computer science at the State University of New York at Stony Brook who got me started with computers 20 years ago.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

For about a year, I flew missions alone. Then I discovered an entire community of Wing Commander fanatics just like myself on Compu-Serve's FSFORUM. They've helped me through some rough spots: thanks, guys. In particular, I want to thank:

David S. "Center" Raley

Wayne Sikes

Scott "Digger" Ward

Center in particular has done a great service to the Wing Commander community with his overview document MISSIONS.WC, which details every mission in Wing Commander I, Secret Missions 1, and Secret Missions 2. To get the information to write this book, I had to replay every mission several times, but Center's work made the whole process much simpler. Additionally, it was Center who discovered and enumerated the whole system in Wing Commander I of "victory points" and "promotion points." I have no idea how he figured the whole thing out, but understanding it made playing the first series—Wing Commander, Secret Missions 1, and Secret Missions 2—a lot more fun.

Christa "Red" Anderson drew most of the maps for the various missions, and Elizabeth "Falcon" Creegan drew the spaceships. I am indebted to both of them for their hard work. Don "Thunderduck" Lewis volunteered to assist Falcon by chasing ships down so that she could sketch them.

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INTRODUCTION

I always wanted to play Wing Commander, even before it existed.

In November 1973, I first got time on a PDP-8 and a paper teletype, time that I used to develop a variation of a popular mainframe-based computer game called Star Trek. There were Klingons, phasers, photon torpedoes, and everything else you'd expect with a game featuring a Constellation-class starship. It was interactive in the sense that you'd type in a command and the system would respond, but the system would only respond after you typed a command; it wasn't like real-time battle, as the Klingons would be happy to sit and wait for days for you to move. I wanted real-time, heart-thumping, Scotty-I-need-impulse-power-in-one-second-or-we're-history computer gaming. A few people at MIT and Carnegie-Mellon were doing that stuff, but in 1973 most of us could just dream about it. Then, in 1990, Origin, a games publisher based in Austin, Texas, released Wing Commander. And since then I've probably frittered away months of my life in front of my PC playing "just one more mission...."

WHAT YOU'LL GET FROM THIS BOOK

So, then, why this book? This book is for someone who has played the Wing Commander games, but that doesn't want to (or can't) spend as much time as I have getting good at it. This book shows you where the difficult parts of the game are, how to get around them, and how to know when you can just plain ignore those difficult parts. This book shows you how to improve your flying and dogfighting tactics, and serves as a reference to the various kinds of spacecraft and weapons that you'll encounter. Trying to figure out what good that damn porcupine mine is on the Raptor? Read Chapter 3 and find out. Does Wing Commander run too fast on your 486? Chapter 1 shows you how to steal a few files from Secret Missions 2 to allow you to adjust the game speed to your liking.

But this book also shows you how to *cheat*. Tired of trying to save that stupid Ralari in the Kurasawa system? I'll show you how to finish that mission and get back to the *Tiger's Claw* in time for last call at the bar.



Had a mission that you had to spend days playing and replaying, only to have the system crash as you were docking with the *Concordia*? You'll learn how to replay it. That mysterious green ship getting in the way in *Privateer*? No problem; I'll show you how to reduce its shields to toilet paper, then move in for the kill.

I spend a lot of time on the various networks—in particular the Internet and CompuServe—and so have had the good fortune of meeting other experienced pilots of the Terran Confederacy. They've passed on invaluable tips to me, and some have even written some very clever programs to allow you to change the game around. I'll tell you where you can find those programs—they can sometimes spell the difference between a challenging game and a heartbreakingly frustrating one. The Wing Commander series is a fantastic set of games, but it does have one painful flaw—it's uneven in the way that it assigns difficulty. Without warning, the game can shift the odds so that they're overwhelmingly against you, making it impossible to get any further in the game; this book helps you even those odds.

THE BEST VIDEO GAME AROUND?

The Wing Commander series of games are all big games—for example, Wing Commander I and the two Secret Missions take up about 20 MB of hard disk space—and they're temperamental as hell, often crashing just as I'm about to complete some nearly impossible mission—but it's the game I've always wished for. Since the original Wing Commander, the Wing Commander story has grown into eight games, all interconnected, and all a lot of fun.

I've got friends who think that Falcon, a jet-fighter simulator, or games of that ilk (including Origin's own Strike Commander) are the greatest games around. One of my coworkers says that the great thing about Falcon is that it's such an accurate simulator of an F-16.

To my mind, the great thing about Wing Commander is that it's totally *unrealistic*. With the jet-fighter programs, you've got to worry about gravity, takeoffs, and landings, as well as bizarre US Department of Defense–designed cockpits. When I've finished a long day, I am not



interested in thrust-to-weight ratios, maximum firing rates, or how fast I can turn before I black out. I just wanna blow some alien scum back to its component atoms. I don't want it too easy and simple—after all, if I just wanted to blow things away, I could play Space Invaders—but playing Wing Commander requires the ability to use some strategy, some navigation, some analysis of sensor readings, choosing from an array of weapons, and a story line. It's the perfect after-work game. The only trouble with it is that it's a bit addictive, and it can also be the perfect 3-AM-just-one-more-mission-and-then-I'll-get-some-sleep game.

BEFORE READING THIS BOOK

If you're reading this book, I assume you've played at least a few missions in one of the Wing Commander games. If you have not yet played any missions, take a look at the "First Flight" card that comes in the Wing Commander box; it's an excellent way to get started playing the game. It walks you through the first mission in Wing Commander, and doesn't throw too much information at you. It gives you just enough information to learn how to fly the mission—and to whet your appetite for the next mission.

I have tried in this book to not just regurgitate the documentation that comes with the Wing Commander games. The Origin write-ups contain some pretty good stuff, so I'll assume in my discussions that you've at least browsed the manuals. If, on the other hand, you haven't yet looked at the Origin documentation, here's a quick guide to the things you'll find useful in the documentation of the various games, arranged by game.

WING COMMANDER I

The documentation for Wing Commander I is mainly a small booklet entitled *Claw Marks*. The first part is some historical background and some advice on flying tactics that, personally, I've never found to be of much help (read Chapter 5 in this book for advice there). Pages 11 through 28 contain some very useful profiles of enemy and friendly ships. You can skip the material that follows the ship profiles—the stuff



on the various Kilrathi aces and your wingmen. The information from page 38 to the end of *Claw Marks* tells you how to play the game, and it's essential. Do not waste time trying to learn how to fly the game with the joystick, mouse, and keyboard; instead, pick one directional control (I recommend the joystick), and learn just that. Ultimately, you'll probably find that the game is best if you use the joystick for directional control and use the keyboard for other control, but I'll cover that in Chapter 5.

SECRET MISSIONS 1 AND 2

The only things you'll need from the Secret Missions documentation are the trivia required to get past the game's initial copy protection, and the instructions on how to transfer a character from Wing Commander to the Secret Missions track.

WING COMMANDER II

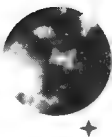
The documentation for Wing Commander II is more concise. About half of it shows you how to play the game—it's a recapitulation of the information from Wing Commander I, and so can be skipped—and the other half is an overview of the ships and weapons of the game. Pages 14 through 23 are the most useful part of the documentation. Skip the marketing ploy from page 24 to the end.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS 1 AND 2

Like the Secret Missions, this documentation is only a few pages; it can be skipped except for the instructions on how to transfer a character from Wing Commander II.

WING COMMANDER ACADEMY

The user interface on Academy is a bit unfamiliar for Wing Commander veterans, so you'll need to read pages 2 through 8 to see how to set up a scenario. Once the simulation is active, however, the game plays just like Wing Commander II. There are two new spacecraft, so you might want to read up on them later in the documentation (page 19 for the Wraith and page 22 for the Jrathek).



PRIVATEER

You should look over the entire Privateer documentation, but it really only prepares you for the first part of the game. You can skip the mini-story of how you acquired the Tarsus from your grandfather. See Chapter 14 in this book for more details on Privateer.

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK?

This book isn't really linear—you needn't read it front to back, cover to cover. Each chapter either stands alone or points you to required information supplied in an earlier chapter. (For that reason, you may see repetitive information in different chapters; I did that specifically so that you don't have to read the whole book in order to get anything out of it.) You may enjoy reading the whole thing—I surely hope so!—but if you've just got a few needs, keep reading to see where to go in the book to get your questions answered.

The book starts off by explaining what goes wrong when you run one of the Wing Commander games, and what to do about it. “Wrong” here doesn't refer to those times that you can't lock the phase torpedoes on a Ralatha before the antimatter guns get you; “wrong” here means that the game crashes, or runs too quickly, or too slowly. Chapter 1 is about installation and usage problems, and how to solve them.

Chapter 2 starts looking at the meat of playing the game—the ships in the game. There are 49 different ships you'll either fly, attack, or escort over; this chapter tells you their capabilities, strengths, and weaknesses. This is not a simple compilation of armor thicknesses and speeds (after all, you can get that information from the documentation that came free with the game!); in Chapter 2, you'll learn the little things like which ships are invulnerable—and, believe it or not, Paladin's *Bonnie Heather* is one of them!

In Chapter 3, you'll learn about the guns, missiles, and mines that appear in the Wing Commander universe. Know your IFF from your IR missiles and you'll know which to use at Kurasawa mission number 2 (the dread Ralari escort).



Chapter 4 is an in-depth look at tactics. What's the safest way to engage a swarm of enemy fighters? How can I avoid asteroids? When I must fight in the asteroids, what's the best approach? When I'm flying a Broadsword, when should I use my rear and side turrets in preference to the forward guns? How can I destroy the Starbase in the last mission of Wing Commander I with just lasers? Learn the game-winning techniques here that you'll need to survive six campaigns. And, if all else fails, you can find out the secret "cheat" commands installed by the Wing Commander programmers to make testing the game easier for themselves, and learn about some programs available that let you modify the capabilities of your ships.

Tactics are no good without strategy, and strategy is what Chapter 5 is all about. It shows you how to win each game by completing the right missions to stay on the "win" path, and what to do if you find yourself on the "lose" path. It may surprise you to find out that many of the really difficult missions needn't be played at all—whether you play them has nothing to do with whether you stay on the winning path. How damaging is it to your winning path to lose a wingman? How few missions can you complete successfully and still win Special Operations 1 and 2? (The surprising answer is just 5.)

Chapter 6 provides an overview of the big picture: what story is being told by the games in general. Starting from the Vega campaign in Wing Commander I and ending with the Steltek dogfight at the end of Privateer, you'll get a synopsis of the stories told by each game, and how they fit together.

Chapters 7 through 14 focus on the particular games. There are maps for each mission, including the enemies and obstacles not explained in the initial game briefings, as well as information about what's really needed to win each mission.

A NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY IN THIS BOOK

Of the eight games discussed here, you'll often see that some tips and advice about those games tend to refer to only one of the games, some



refer to a group of games, and some refer to all games. For clarity's sake, you'll see these terms in this book. When you read "Wing Commander," without any numbers on it, the book is referring to all eight games.

"Wing Commander I," "Secret Missions 1," "Secret Missions 2," "Wing Commander II," "Special Operations 1," "Special Operations 2," "Academy," or "Privateer"—references including version numbers, when they exist—refer to a particular game. "The Wing Commander I games" refers to the group of games represented by Wing Commander I and both Secret Missions. "The Wing Commander II games" refers to the group of games represented by Wing Commander II and the Special Operations games.

I guess that's about it, so—hey, what's that sound? General stations red alert! Guess it's off to the flight deck for us, so charge up your gun capacitors to maximum, program those nav computers, and let's go make space free for humanity!

**SOLVING
HARDWARE
PROBLEMS
IN WING
COMMANDER**



O N E





The Wing Commander games offer a quality of play that is basically unmatched in the industry for games in their class. The price to be paid for that quality of play, however, is that these games push the performance and compatibility envelope for most computers to—and beyond—their limits. That can lead to a scenario like this one:

At some point, you'll fly a mission that takes you thirty minutes to complete. It'll be the tenth time that you've done this mission. You'll finally get it done, and you then head home to redock with your mother ship and get credit for the mission. And that's when the screen will clear and you'll get dumped out of the game with nothing but a *divide by zero error* message. Or you'll spend two hours installing a speech pack, only to have the game freeze up as soon as a game character tries to talk. It just happens. Or you install Wing Commander I on your 486DX2-66 computer, only to find that it is unplayable, as the bad guys all bear down upon you at light speed, lancing through your shields in an instant.

It's a sad fact of the Wing Commander games that they're prone to some annoying bugs and "features." But many of those things can be fixed by either setting up the game right, avoiding other programs while running the games, or employing a few sneaky tricks. That's what this chapter is all about.

SLOWING DOWN WING COMMANDER ON A FAST MACHINE

Wing Commander is probably best played on a 386DX 20-MHz machine; that seems to be the ideal machine for playing Wing Commander I and Secret Missions. A machine like that is also just about right for Wing



Commander II and Special Operations, although a 25-MHz 386DX without processor cache might be a bit better.

A faster machine than 25-MHz 386DX can pose a problem. If you run Wing Commander I, II, the Secret Missions, or Special Operations on a 486, you're likely to be breathing vacuum in no time at all. Just a year or two ago, 486-based computers were the sole province of the rich and powerful. Nowadays, however, virtually all new PCs (with the exception of notebooks) are 486-based. So, if you've got one of these speed demons, how can you run the Wing Commander series? There are three things that you can do:

- slow down your PC's clock rate with the turbo switch
- disable the PC's processor cache
- adjust the frame-per-second display rate

USE THE TURBO SWITCH TO SLOW DOWN YOUR PC

Every computer runs to the beat of a clock. Each time the clock goes *tick*, some operation—a math function, storing something or retrieving something—gets done. Therefore, the more clock ticks your computer receives per second, the more things that it gets done or, in other words, the faster it is. The number of clock ticks per second is the *clock rate* of your computer, and it's measured in *megahertz*, which is usually abbreviated *MHz*. One MHz is one million clock ticks per second; contemporary PCs tend to have clock rates from 20 MHz to 99 MHz.

In order to accommodate older programs, your PC may have a button on the front of its case labeled "Turbo." There may also be a light labeled "Turbo." Assuming that you have such a button, pressing it will reduce the clock rate of your computer. At the reduced clock rate, the PC may be better suited to running Wing Commander games. (The button should probably be labeled "DE-turbo," as its true function is to slow your computer down, not speed it up.) Please don't forget to press the button again after you've exited Wing Commander, or you'll run your business software at a slower speed—and that's not what you intended. Most PCs with turbo switches "remember" the state of the switch, so don't assume

that rebooting the computer will restore it to the higher speed. And if you can't find a switch labeled "turbo," then don't worry about it; not every PC has a turbo switch.

Now, some computers have a turbo button and an LED labeled "turbo," but pressing the button does not change the state of the light; as a result, those people assume that the turbo switch doesn't do anything. Don't assume that! Some PCs do, indeed, have a functioning turbo switch... but not a functioning turbo light. If you press the button once, then you should assume that whatever the switch was going to do, it did, and that you should press it again after exiting Wing Commander. More than one person has inadvertently de-turboed his computer without realizing it, only to be embarrassed when, after complaining to his hardware dealer that "this computer runs too slowly..." the dealer fixes it by pressing the turbo button to restore the computer to its initial speed.

You may also find that de-turboing your PC won't solve the problem. Some computers de-turbo to 50 percent of turbo speed—for example, a 33-MHz computer might de-turbo down to 16 MHz—and some don't de-turbo much at all, as in the PC that changes from 33 MHz to 25 MHz. Unfortunately, some drop *way* too much, like a computer that goes from a clock rate of 50 MHz to 8 MHz: 50's too fast for Wing Commander, and 8's much too slow. So, if changing the PC's clock rate doesn't solve the speed problem, then skip to the next section.

DISABLE PROCESSOR CACHE TO SLOW YOUR PC

Most modern PCs have two kinds of memory, or RAM (Random Access Memory). They've got a lot of relatively slow, relatively cheap memory called Dynamic RAM (DRAM), and a small amount of relatively fast, relatively expensive memory called Static RAM (SRAM). The small amount (usually around 256K) of SRAM is often called *processor cache*.

The presence of processor cache can speed up a PC remarkably, often by a factor of 50 percent. Conversely, disabling PC processor cache can slow down a PC, so disabling processor cache is worth a try if your PC has processor cache.



You can find out if your PC has processor cache (it's often just called "cache," but I'll call it "processor cache" in this book to distinguish it from "disk cache," which is a different thing altogether) by looking at your PC's documentation. Processor cache is a selling point for PCs, so if you've got it, the fact will be prominently displayed in the "features" section of the documentation. You'll have to do some poking around in your PC's documentation to find out how to disable the processor cache. On some PCs, it's just not possible.

If you have a 486-based computer (whether it's 486DX, 486DX2, 486SX, or 486SLC), then there is also a small amount of processor cache inside your CPU chip. This is often called "internal processor cache" to distinguish it from the other processor cache, which is logically called "external processor cache." Many computers based on the American Megatrends, Inc., (AMI) BIOS have a built-in setup program called the "Advanced Chip Setup" that offers the option of disabling either or both processor caches. If your computer gives you the option to disable either or both caches, then try out different combinations of caches to see if you can find one that makes playing Wing Commander easier.

Oh, and if you *do* disable your cache, don't forget to re-enable it before you return to your other applications. Windows can get mighty slow without processor cache on a 486! Again, don't be discouraged if you can't disable your processor cache—there's still a way to slow down Wing Commander, it's a piece of cake to perform, and it works on every PC.

ADJUST THE FRAME DISPLAY RATE ON SOME GAMES

By the time that Secret Missions 2 appeared, in late 1991, it was pretty clear that more and more people were trying to run Wing Commander with machines faster than 25 MHz, and they weren't enjoying it. The games ran too fast, and the players were killed before they even finished the first mission. Now, varying CPU speed isn't a problem for most games—most games adjust themselves automatically to compensate for different CPU speeds. But the Wing Commander games didn't, and still don't, except for Privateer—it has an automatic speed adjustment feature, so you needn't (and, in fact, *can't*) fiddle with the responsiveness in

Privateer. But even though the Secret Missions 2 and the subsequent games before Privateer don't adjust speed, they do offer a sort of next best thing—adjustable frame-update rates.

By default, the Wing Commander games try to display as many pictures (*frames*) as possible per second so as to make the animation as smooth as possible. But, unfortunately, the rate of frame display determines the amount of action that occurs as well. More frames per second mean faster-responding enemies, faster and more lethal weapons, and shorter games. So being able to adjust frame rates equates to being able to adjust play speed.

When Secret Missions 2 starts up, it displays a frame each $\frac{4}{60}$ of a second—15 frames per second. If you adjust it to show a frame each $\frac{9}{60}$ of a second—about 7 frames per second—then the game becomes quite a bit more playable on a fast machine. You adjust the rate by pressing Alt-plus (the gray plus key on the far right of the keypad) to slow down the frame rate (and the speed of the game) and Alt-minus (again, the minus key on the far right of the keyboard) to speed up the frame rate and the game speed.

This frame-speed adjustment will work on Secret Missions 2, Wing Commander II, Special Operations 1 and 2, and Academy. It will *not* work in Wing Commander I or Secret Missions I. Not, unless, you're willing to do a small sneaky trick....

MAKING WING COMMANDER I AND SECRET MISSIONS I SUPPORT FRAME RATE CONTROL

Most of the Wing Commander games have their own separate executable file: Secret Missions is mainly contained in the file SM2.EXE, Wing Commander II is WC2.EXE, Special Operations 1 is SO1.EXE, Special Operations 2 is SO2.EXE, Academy is WCA.EXE, and Privateer is PRIV.EXE. But both Wing Commander I and Secret Missions I share a single program file, WC.EXE.

This WC.EXE program file is the reason why you can't adjust the frame-update-rate control; the capability just isn't built into it, as it was designed earlier than the other programs. But you can use the SM2.EXE



program, the program that runs Secret Missions 2, to play games from Wing Commander I and Secret Missions 1! Here's how.

How the Trick Works

The secret really lies in the fact that both WC.EXE and SM2.EXE share files in the same directories. When you install the Wing Commander I files in a directory, the Wing Commander installation program creates a directory called GAMEDAT under whatever directory you've installed Wing Commander into. Your saved games from Wing Commander and Secret Missions 1 are in a file called SAVEGAME.WLD in the GAMEDAT directory; the saved games from Secret Missions 2 are also saved in GAMEDAT, under the name CRUSADE.WLD. The key in making Secret Missions 2 run Wing Commander missions is in knowing that both SAVEGAME.WLD and CRUSADE.WLD are *in the same format*. That means that if you take a SAVEGAME.WLD (the save file from Wing Commander I and Secret Missions 1) and copy it to a file named CRUSADE.WLD, and then run SM2.EXE rather than WC.EXE, then you can start up a saved mission from Wing Commander I or Secret Missions 1!

How to Run Wing Commander Missions under Secret Missions 2

Here's an example of how you'd use the Secret Missions 2 program to play the Wing Commander I game. You must be at the DOS prompt (C:\> or a similar prompt) to do the following.

- 1** First, you've got to have Wing Commander I, Secret Missions 1, and Secret Missions 2 installed in a directory on your hard disk; for my example, I'll put it in C:\ORIGIN. As you read earlier, the installation procedures will create a directory called C:\ORIGIN\GAMEDAT.
- 2** Back up the existing CRUSADE.WLD by typing **COPY C:\ORIGIN\GAMEDAT\CRUSADE.WLD C:\ORIGIN\GAMEDAT\CRUSADE.OLD**; you should see the message *1 file(s) copied*. Note that you should enter this on one line.

- 3** Create a starting point for the game and put it in the SAVEGAME.WLD. Do that by starting up the original Wing Commander game (WC.EXE). Then choose Start New Game and enter your name and call sign. You'll be in the Bar; move over to the sleeping quarters and save this starting point; call it **START** for this example. Exit Wing Commander either by clicking on the airlock door, or by pressing Alt-x.
- 4** Copy the SAVEGAME.WLD file, which now contains that starting point, to CRUSADE.WLD: type **COPY C:\ORIGIN\GAMEDAT\SAVEGAME.WLD C:\ORIGIN\GAMEDAT\CRUSADE.WLD** and press Enter (assuming that you've placed your programs in a directory called C:\ORIGIN). Note that you should enter this on one line.
- 5** Now type **SM2** to start up the Secret Missions 2 game. You'll see two options: Start Secret Missions 2 and Continue Campaign. Select Continue Campaign. You'll see the sleeping quarters, and in one bunk will be your START scenario. Awaken it with a mouse click, and it'll ask *Are you sure you want to awaken START?* Tell it **Y** and press Enter.

Now you can move over to the Briefing Room and start off the first Wing Commander mission, Enyo 1; from this point on, you'll never again need to run WC.EXE, and you can adjust the frame update rate with Alt-plus and Alt-minus. You can do this, by the way, for *any* Wing Commander I or Secret Missions 1 mission that you want to run under SM2.EXE.

Problems With Running Wing Commander Missions Under SM2.EXE

This SM2.EXE trick is pretty neat, but it's got one problem: The universe of Secret Missions 2 is just a bit different from the universe of Wing Commander I/Secret Missions 1, and so running SM2.EXE for these earlier missions can lead to a few small annoyances.

The first problem you'll notice is that the wingmen are a bit messed up. You'll see Paladin at the briefings and in the bar, but he's sometimes



referred to as Doomsday. Similarly, you'll see Bossman around, but he's sometimes referred to as Jazz. After the second mission in Secret Missions 1, Bossman mysteriously dies—there's a reference to it at one of your debriefings, but no funeral, and then he reappears in the bar later on, with Jazz's name but Bossman's face. What's going on? Simply that Secret Missions 2 introduced two new wingmen, a pessimistic fellow named Doomsday and a hotshot pilot with a taste for music by the name of Jazz. So if the messages seem a bit bizarre when you're flying with Paladin or Bossman, don't worry about it—it's just an SM2.EXE side effect.

The second problem stems from the fact that the Dralothi light fighter (the pancake-shaped thing) was upgraded to a Dralothi Mark II in Secret Missions 2. The big difference between the Mark I and the Mark II is that the Mark I uses relatively ineffective laser cannons, whereas the Mark II is equipped with the nastier (but shorter-range) mass drivers. This just means that you've got to be a bit more careful when flying against Draloths than you might have to ordinarily (that is, without the SM2.EXE program), but you needn't be *that* careful. There is a mission wherein you have to take on nine of them in two waves (four and then five, with one of the fivers being a Kilrathi Ace named Deathstroke), and playing that against Dralothi Mark IIs is a bit harder, but not impossible. Again, this isn't a fatal flaw, it just makes the game a trifle harder.

Third and lastly, running Wing Commander I and Secret Missions 1 under SM2.EXE will change the behavior of the Kilrathi aces a bit. The aces under Wing Commander I all had different behavior patterns—Baktosh Redclaw was dangerous and crazy, but ran away at the first sign of trouble, but Khajja the Fang was just cold, calculating, and single-minded. Both dangerous, but dangerous in different ways. In Wing Commander II, that was simplified with the Drakhrai, the Emperor Rah'kra's Imperial Guard. The Drakhrai are tougher to kill, but that's the only way that they're different from normal Kilrathi fliers—there's no special personalities. Anyway, using SM2.EXE will convert all of the Kilrathi aces into generic Drakhrai. The loss sounds worse than it actually is; for all the ink that the manual spills about how different these aces are, I found them all to be just a bit better shielded than the normal fliers; that was it. Drakhrai are about as difficult to kill as were the individual aces, so you're not really missing anything. However, if you run Wing Commander I or Secret

Missions 1 under WC.EXE instead of SM2.EXE, then the ace names appear on the tactical screen: instead of “Salthi,” it may say “Baktosh,” for that particular Salthi-flying ace. If you play under SM2.EXE, however, then all you see on the tactical screen is “Drakhrai.”

SPEEDING UP THE GAME ON SLOWER PCS

You’ve just read how to slow down a fast computer; but what can you do if you’re trying to run Wing Commander on a slower computer, like a 386SX running at 16–25 MHz? (Don’t even try to run Wing Commander on a 286-based system; it’s just plain frustrating, and there’s no way to really get any decent performance from the machine.) Well, speeding up the game isn’t as straightforward as is slowing it down, but there’re a few things that you can try.

ADJUST THE FRAME-UPDATE RATE

It’s not as effective in speeding up a system as it is in slowing down a system, but increasing the frame rate (Alt-plus) can make a slower system run more smoothly. Experiment to find the best rate for your system.

SUPPRESS VIDEO AND MINIMIZE MESSAGE LENGTH

You may find that the messages that display from wingmen, escorted ships, and enemy ships just stay up too long, obscuring too much of your screen and making an already slow-responding system seem even harder to use adequately. Additionally, the video face that shows up on your tactical screen deprives you of important information about the ship that you’re dogfighting with. One answer is to suppress the video images when people talk to you on the commlink; you do that by pressing **V**; you’ll see the message *Video images disabled*. You’ll still get your messages, but your tactical readouts won’t be obscured. You can also make those messages go away more quickly (they’re usually of little or no value anyway—it’s usually enemy taunting or wingmen whining



about something)—by pressing the **M** key three times. You should see the message *Message length set to 1* after you do that.

DISABLE SOUNDS, MUSIC, AND SPEECH

Your CPU must spend some of its capabilities managing any sounds that your system makes. That means that installing the speech pack, enabling sound effects, or music will slow your system down. I said earlier that a 20-MHz 386DX is a good platform for the Wing Commander I and Secret Missions games—but that machine gets a bit strained in an asteroid field with five or six Salthis. There's just too much for the computer to keep track of, and so the action bogs down. Music and sound effects bog it down even more, so if you find that a particularly complex scenario (lots of ships and other objects on the screen) runs slowly, then perhaps you should disable the sounds and then retry playing the mission. You can always re-enable the sounds after you've finished the mission.

USE THE KEYBOARD ONLY

Mice and joysticks must be *polled*, meaning that the CPU must constantly read them, many times per second, to maintain the illusion of instant response to user moves on one of those two input devices. That polling takes up some of the CPU's resources.

It is possible to play the game with just the keyboard. (It's not easy, but it's possible.) The documentation shipped with the Wing Commander games shows how to do it—the hardest part to get comfortable with is in using the arrow keys to steer your spacecraft. It's not impossible, however, and if you've ever played one of the old flight-simulator programs, the ones that appeared before joystick support was widespread, then you may find that you can transfer some of those old skills to this new problem.

The bottom line on running the Wing Commander games on a machine slower than a 20-MHz 386DX is that you shouldn't; it really takes a lot of the fun out of the game. But if you're stuck with slower hardware and still want to run these games, you've now got a few things to try to turbocharge the action a bit.

RUN IN EGA MODE

If you tell the installation program to run the game in EGA video mode rather than VGA mode, the program will run a bit faster. You may not like running in EGA mode, however, as it's not nearly as nice to look at.

BUGS AND INSTABILITIES

No matter how well you've installed your system, no matter how much you've pampered Wing Commander by tailoring your CONFIG.SYS to its needs, it's still going to crash or do odd things on you now and then. Here's a collection of tips and warnings about things you should or shouldn't do, and odd things that you may see but that don't make sense.

RUN WITHOUT SPEECH

The speech packs seem to cause more problems for users than any other part of the Wing Commander universe. Log onto CompuServe's FSFORUM or GAMEPUBA forums (FSFORUM is where people who play Wing Commander exchange hints and tips, and GAMEPUBA is where you can directly contact Origin about problems like crashes or bad distribution diskettes), read the problem reports, and almost half are because running a speech pack crashed a system. It's hard to say definitively whether it's a bug or a common hardware problem, but I've installed the Wing Commander II Speech Pack on a number of computers that I know are configured correctly, and they crash more often than they don't.

The speech packs don't add all that much to the game, so you may want to give them a miss altogether. The vast majority of the game-text sequences are not handled by the speech packs, so you're not giving up that much by not installing the speech packs—and you're gaining reliability.

CHECK YOUR SOUND CARD

While on the subject of sound, it's worth noting that you should check that your sound card is installed properly. When a sound card is



installed in your system, either by you or by a dealer, the card must be configured. “Configuration” here means setting jumpers on the sound card to make it use particular hardware interrupt levels, also called *IRQ levels*, and particular Direct Memory Access (DMA) channels.

Your computer supports IRQ levels between 2 and 15 on the expansion slots inside your computer—the slots like the one that your sound card is installed. No two pieces of hardware inside your computer can use the same IRQ level, or an *interrupt conflict* occurs. When two devices attempt to use the same interrupt level, the result is often that neither device functions properly.

The Creative Laboratories Sound Blaster is a common and well-supported sound board, but it’s got a major flaw having to do with interrupts. The Sound Blaster is shipped with its board set up to use IRQ 7; if you don’t do anything and just install the Sound Blaster into your computer—which is what most people do—then it’ll use IRQ 7. The problem is that the parallel port LPT1, the main printer port on your system, also uses IRQ 7. Result: a conflict right out of the box, but a conflict that doesn’t show up until you start using the sound board. That means that you can have a computer that works just fine most of the time, but when you start running Wing Commander (or any other program that uses the Sound Blaster), unpleasant things start happening: crashes, lockups, or software that just plain refuses to work. So check the interrupts on your sound card before running Wing Commander, or find a local guru to check your system over.

DO NOT USE DISK-CACHE PROGRAMS WITH WING COMMANDER I

In order to speed up disk performance, Microsoft ships a program called SMARTDRV with DOS and Windows. It is a member of the class of programs known as *disk-cache programs*. Basically, disk-cache programs work by setting aside some of your computer’s RAM-type memory (which is fast, but expensive) to make your computer’s disk drive (which is slower, but cheaper) work more quickly. You see, since memory is much faster than disk, you’d greatly improve your computer’s performance by taking all the data off your disk drive and stuffing it into

memory, and then accessing the data from memory. That's not possible, however, as you don't have nearly as much memory as you have disk-drive space. So a disk-cache program works a sort of compromise: It figures out which small parts of the disk you are most likely to use and keeps just those parts in memory. Then, when your PC needs the data from those oft-used parts of disk, the disk-cache program can provide that data much more quickly, as it's already in memory.

Disk-caching is a good thing, but it's definitely not recommended for the Wing Commander I games. Using SMARTDRV, PC-Kwik Cache, or any of the other popular disk-cache programs with any of the games in the Wing Commander I group of programs can cause *divide by zero* errors and system crashes. You can, however, use disk-cache programs with the later games, and in fact it's recommended that you do to improve performance. If you're running one of the games from a CD-ROM, then using SMARTDRV is a great idea if you've got DOS 6.2—the SMARTDRV for DOS 6.2 will cache CD-ROM data. (Earlier SMARTDRVs did not affect CD-ROM performance at all.)

DON'T LOAD DOSKEY

The useful DOSKEY utility, which stores your previous commands and allows you to recall them with a keystroke or two, shouldn't be loaded before loading any of the Wing Commander programs. (I don't know why, or what it causes, by the way; it's just something that an Origin tech support person told me after looking at my AUTOEXEC.BAT when I was experiencing general crashes.)

AVOID MULTITASKING ENVIRONMENTS

Don't try to run Wing Commander under Windows or OS/2. Privateer actually cannot run under Windows or OS/2 reliably, as it uses a method to access memory that is incompatible with Windows and OS/2, a method called the Virtual Control Program Interface (VCPI).

The most important reasons to avoid multitasking environments are that they 1) take up precious memory and 2) they slow the game down considerably. You actually can get most of the Wing Commander universe to run reliably under OS/2—you can't under Windows—but at a



much slower rate than would be possible under DOS. (Privateer, again, will not run under OS/2.) It's just not clear what value that would be.

FREE AS MUCH MEMORY AS POSSIBLE

This is hardly an “inside tip” or “secret,” but it's worth noting that Wing Commander gets more stable as you make more memory available to it. Run a 386 memory manager, load as many programs as you can outside of the bottom 640K of conventional memory, and make sure that you've got as much free DOS memory as possible before you start any of the Wing Commander games. There isn't time here for a discussion of setting up memory managers, but there are many books and articles available today on running contemporary memory managers. If you are using DOS 5 or a later version, then you have a memory manager that comes as part of your operating system—make sure you're using it. (If you need info on configuring DOS's memory manager, take a look at *Mastering DOS 6.2* or the *DOS 6.2 Instant Reference*, both from SYBEX. *Mastering's* the heavyweight book; the *Instant Reference* is pocket-sized.) Conversely, as you arrange Wing Commander so that it uses less memory—that is, when you disable sound and music—then it also becomes more stable.

ONLY USE THE JOYSTICK TO STEER

If you're flying with the joystick (you can run Wing Commander without a joystick, and some folks actually run it on a laptop, using the mouse in place of the joystick, but it's definitely tougher flying with a mouse than a joystick), then you can do a number of things with the joystick besides steer your ship. You can:

- fire the selected gun (press the first joystick button)
- activate the afterburners (press and hold the second button)
- roll (hold down the second button and heel the stick over)
- fire off a missile (simultaneously press the first and second button)

In practice, almost none of this is useful, and indeed can get you in trouble. It's easy to try to press button one and button two to fire a

missile, but end up getting the afterburners instead. If you were thinking that you'd shove a heat-seeker up the tailpipe of a capital ship, but you get the afterburners instead, then you're likely to plaster your ship against the cold, hard reality of 250 cm of durasteel armor. Trying to roll so as to line up with the Concordia on an approach by pressing the second button and leaning the joystick over can also lead to your ship being obliterated against the side of your home ship if the afterburners kick in at the wrong time.

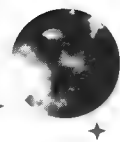
The bottom line is that you'll probably have better luck if you stick to the keyboard for most control functions, and just use the joystick for steering. Read Chapter 4, Tactics, for more information on using the keyboard and the joystick to fly and fight quickly and accurately.

INVISIBLE SHIPS IN WING COMMANDER I

When Wing Commander II introduced the idea of stealth ships—ships that were invisible—I just nodded my head. “Yes, of course,” I said to myself. “I’ve seen that before.”

In one of the last Wing Commander I missions, you’ve got to fly defense for the Tiger’s Claw. I found myself all of a sudden being attacked by a ship that I could not see! It emitted laser bursts, and I could lock it with my targeting computer, but I could not see it out of my forward viewport. Fascinated, I chased the “stealth” fighters, hunting them down and finally destroying them. Unfortunately, however, chasing them distracted me away from the Tiger’s Claw long enough that the remaining fighters slagged my poor carrier.

The odd resemblance between my experience in the Wing Commander I mission in the Vega sector and the story from the beginning of Wing Commander II made me go back and look in greater detail at the Tiger’s Claw defense scenario. I found that “stealth” fighters don’t appear all that often, but they do sometimes. (I also found out that there really is no connection between what happened to me and the Wing Commander story line; the bug’s appearance at that particular time was just coincidence.) It seems that if you move the mouse and the joystick, then the enemy ships sometimes disappear. If that happens, you should probably pick up the mouse and move it somewhere so that you don’t



accidentally jostle it while you play—which is probably what brought out the “stealth” fighters in the first place.

SPONTANEOUS SHIP COMBUSTION

All the Wing Commander attack scenarios work with a “magic boundary” around some navigation point. If you’re going to attack Ayer’s Rock, for example (a target in Special Operations 2), then the enemy ships don’t appear until you’re within roughly 20,000 meters of Ayer’s Rock. If you turn around and move just outside the 20,000-meter circle, then the red dots (the bad guys) disappear from your long-range scanner. Move back, and they reappear. That leads to an odd bug that crops up and then—but, unlike many bugs, it’s a good bug in that it makes your life easier.

One tactic (which is discussed in detail in Chapter 5) to attack a capital target is to fly out on the periphery of the 20,000-meter “magic circle,” staying just inside it, and taunting one enemy fighter to attack you. If the taunting works, then just one ship comes out and attacks, and you can pick it off at your leisure. Repeat the process, and you can considerably even up some nasty odds when attacking a capital ship. Now, sometimes, you’ll accidentally stray outside the “magic circle,” and the enemy ships will disappear from your scanner. Fly back into the circle, and they’ll return. But sometimes, as you leave the circle, the enemy ships will blow up all by themselves.

Now, I’m not suggesting flying in and out of the “magic circle” to invoke this bug and simply tackle a large number of ships; but if you see this happen, then you’ll likely not believe your eyes. Believe, however: Spontaneous ship combustion *does* occur. (Perhaps it’s connected to the increased UFO sightings?) I’ve won Jotunheim 3 (the Secret Missions 1 scenario where you must fly against the Gwynafar/Johann, the ConFed ship captured intact by the Kilrathi) twice this way.

UNAVOIDABLE CRASHES

Finally, you should know that sometimes the game locks up or dumps you out to DOS for no good reason. It just happens. The best that you can do to minimize this is to have plenty of free conventional memory,

correctly installed hardware, and these lines in your CONFIG.SYS:

```
BUFFERS=20  
FILES=20  
STACKS=9,512
```

RUNNING FROM A CD-ROM

Wing Commander games are big. The Wing Commander I group of stories takes up about 17 MB, and the Wing Commander II group takes up 28 MB, and Privateer is 26 MB just for that game alone; at this writing, there are no follow-on games planned by Origin. (Academy isn't very big, but then there's no story line in it.) For that reason, it's nice that the games are available on CD-ROM. That way, you can pop the games on when you want to run them, and they only take a negligible amount of disk space for configuration files. When the pressure of work takes you away from the Wing Commander universe (and if it does, shouldn't you be thinking of another line of work? There are priorities in life to consider, you know!), then you can just remove the CD-ROM, put it on the shelf, and come back to the game when you've got time. You needn't install and uninstall the game—CD-ROMs are quite convenient.

CD-ROMs come with a price, however: speed. Just popping the Wing Commander CDs (either the CD for WC I or for WC II) into a CD-ROM drive and running the games may drive you crazy because of the lousy performance of most CD-equipped systems. With that in mind, here are a few suggestions.

BUY HIGH-PERFORMANCE CD-ROM DRIVES

If you've already purchased a drive, then ignore this advice. But an important part of getting Wing Commander—or anything on a CD-ROM—to run well is in getting the data off the drive quickly. The measure of that is in the *data-transfer time*, a value measured in kilobytes per second. Cheap CD-ROMs may only transfer data at 150 KB/s, a prescription for frustration. It's maddening working with CD-ROMs like those because every time the game's scene changes, it's got to load tons of data off the



CD-ROM, and on a slow CD-ROM it can take up to a minute to do that. Believe me, that minute gets frustrating quickly. Better to purchase the “double-spin” drives that offer a transfer rate of 300 KB/s, or the “triple-spin” or “quadruple-spin” drives that transfer at 450 KB/s and 600 KB/s, respectively.

USE DOS 6.2'S SMARTDRV PROGRAM

Okay, so you don't want to buy a new CD-ROM drive; what else can you do? You can run the SMARTDRV disk-cache program that comes with DOS 6.2, as it caches CD-ROMs. Then give it lots of memory to work with. SMARTDRV gets invoked in your AUTOEXEC.BAT file on a line that looks like

```
C:\DOS\SMARTDRV.EXE
```

You can further control SMARTDRV by adding a number to the line, a number that indicates the amount of memory in kilobytes that you want SMARTDRV to use for caching. Give SMARTDRV the total memory in your system, minus 1500K. For example, if you've got four megabytes of memory (around 4000K), then your SMARTDRV invocation could look like this:

```
C:\DOS\SMARTDRV.EXE 2500
```

Of course, don't do this if you're running Wing Commander I; as you've already read, that can make the game crash.

EXPERIMENT WITH CD-ROM BUFFERS

Also in your AUTOEXEC.BAT is the line that starts up the MS-DOS CD-ROM extensions, MSCDEX.EXE. MSCDEX.EXE has an optional parameter **/M:n** where *n* is the number of buffers to set aside in RAM for CD-ROM access. Try different values to find the best one for your particular computer.

COMMON COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE WING COMMANDER STORIES

The story line in the Wing Commander universe tends to create discussion—for example, how can you hear a spaceship *whoosh* past you in the vacuum of space?—so here's a synopsis of some of the issues that Wing Commander players have tossed around on the computer forums. Now, I realize that this doesn't exactly "fit" in a chapter about hardware problems; but, to tell the truth, it didn't really fit anywhere else, either—so it's here.

PHYSICAL IMPOSSIBILITIES

How can a ship go *whoosh* as it passes you in airless space? Simple: The *whoosh* is created by the in-cabin audio feedback system, a system designed by the ConFed design labs in New York to allow the pilot to use all of his or her senses to keep track of what's around the ship.

If you turn off the engines, the ship stops. That shouldn't happen, as applying a force to an object in space will give it a constant—and eternal—velocity; there's no gravity around to slow it down. Why does setting speed to 0 make the ship stop? Simple: There are retro-thrusters on the ship. Setting speed to 0 instructs the in-flight management computer to fire the retros so as to make the ship motionless with respect to nearby objects.

How can you "dodge" a laser bolt? Doesn't it travel at the speed of light? Well, first of all, these ships are fast; for example, a Centurion running at full speed travels at 1000 kilometers per second—that's 0.3 percent of the speed of light in a vacuum, enough to produce some minor relativistic effects! For example, consider how little Angel, Jazz, and Spirit have aged from Wing Commander I to Wing Commander II, despite the ten years that have passed, and the obvious aging that occurs to your character, who has not been flying for that ten years. (Look at Joe Halde-man's *The Forever War* for an illustration of this.) One relativistic effect is the slowing down of time for people traveling at high speeds, so it could be.... Anyway, a straight laser beam could not, of course, be dodged; nothing is faster than light (except for tachyons; so why is the tachyon cannon slower than the laser cannon...don't ask, okay?), but the laser



bolt is not simply light. It is, instead, a (got your hip-boots on?) standing wave interference phenomenon that essentially “concentrates” packets of laser energy, and it is the root-mean-square velocity of the standing-wave phenomenon that is slow enough to see coming, and to dodge.

WHY IS THE CHARACTER OF A FIXED SEX AND RACE?

In Wing Commander, you play a character that is a white male. Why doesn't the game offer the option of different races and sexes? Two reasons: size and story. Adding the new bitmaps that would be required to support three races and two sexes would increase by a factor of six that amount of disk space needed. Origin didn't think that was practical. (Although it would be nice—and possible—now that CD-ROM versions are available.)

As to sex, there probably wouldn't be any trouble with offering players of either sex in Wing Commander I, but there's a romance in Wing Commander II that just wouldn't work if the player's character were female. It's an annoyance, yes, but chalk it up more to limitations in the technology than to insensitivity on Origin's part.

MUST I BE A DRUG SMUGGLER IN PRIVATEER?

As Privateer moves along, there are missions that some people might find personally offensive. For instance, a few missions involve smuggling Brilliance, a drug, from a pirate base to the Troy system. In another mission, you've got to track down and kill an honest pilot, Captain Seelig, whose only crime is that he crossed Raymond Lynch, a major underworld figure. (Actually, you need not kill Seelig; you can fulfill the mission by just talking to him and running away, and that's how I've played the game successfully.)

This generated a lot of talk on the FSFORUM area of CompuServe. The bottom line on the whole matter is that most of the missions are quite innocuous—for example, at Basra, you're just playing mercenary in a war of interstellar corporation versus interstellar corporation, and that's not

likely to get anyone stirred up; and on Oxford, you're protecting academic freedom—but that probably Origin could have picked a few of its missions better. But as more than one person has observed, "Remember: It's just a game."

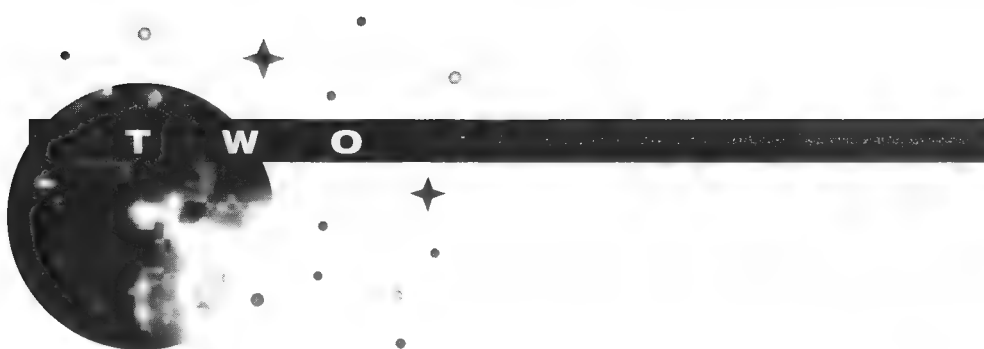
A FINAL WORD BEFORE GOING ON

This chapter may have sounded somewhat scary—after all, if there are these many bugs, should I run this game?—but it shouldn't be. The Wing Commander games are larger than many operating systems that have been built on PCs, and the games are cheaper than those operating systems. There are idiosyncrasies of each game, certainly, but with the information in this chapter you'll be able to avoid the large obstacles—or perhaps "asteroids" is the correct word—in your path. And it's well worth getting beyond those obstacles, as these are neat games—and once you're past the obstacles, you can focus on the fun part, flying all those neat ships. In fact, that's what the next chapter is all about, so turn the page and let's launch!

**THE SHIPS
OF WING
COMMANDER**



T W O



The central part of Wing Commander is the flying. The cinematic sequences set the stage, but the fun lies in locking a Jalkehi into your sights, loosing a missile, and watching it blow to pieces.

Now, flying over one hundred missions just like that sounds like it could get boring, but it doesn't largely because you get to fly a number of different ships over the course of the games (17 ships in total), and you also meet dozens of friendly and enemy ships, all with different characteristics.

This chapter examines the ships of Wing Commander. It explains the different characteristics of the fifty or so ships that you'll encounter, so that you can understand better how to work with those ships to get the games' missions accomplished.

Fifty ships is a lot of spacecraft to have to figure out, but anyone wanting to be successful in Wing Commander has got to learn which ships are easy marks and which are fusion-powered death. (Actually, the number of ships isn't that bad—you'll find out in this chapter that a number of ships are basically just clones of other ships, but with different-looking outsides. Learn to dispatch one of 'em, and you've learned how to dispatch 'em all.) In this chapter, you'll first learn about the ship characteristics—afterburners, shields, armor, and the like. Then we'll examine each ship in detail, discussing its strengths and weaknesses. For example, do you know how to finish the first mission in Secret Missions 1 and destroy the last pair of Salthis with your Hornet, even after your laser cannons have been shot off? Read on....

SHIP CHARACTERISTICS

Each ship has its strengths and its weaknesses—although if you were discussing the Scimitar or the Broadsword, you'd probably more



correctly say that some ships had their weaknesses and their weaknesses. In any case, each ship has some or all of these characteristics:

- Cruising speed
- Max normal speed
- Afterburner speed
- Shields
- Armor
- Guns
- Missile racks
- Mines
- Tractor beam
- Repair droid
- ECM (electronic countermeasures) pods

SHIP VELOCITIES

Each ship has a forward velocity that ranges from 0 kilometers per second (kps) to some maximum value. (One kilometer per second is quite fast—2232 miles per hour, or 3600 kilometers per hour. 11 kps is roughly escape velocity from the Earth's gravity, 8 kps is about the speed of an Earth-orbiting craft.) The ships use an ion drive powered by a fusion reactor. The value of this approach is that it can support quite great velocities, and the fusion reactor uses hydrogen—the most common element in the universe—as fuel. Furthermore, the great abundance of hydrogen means that very little fuel must be carried on board, as an electronic field projected toward the front of the spacecraft can suck up free-floating hydrogen in space. Now, there's not enough hydrogen around to support the kind of energy needed for speeds above 400–500 kps, so spaceships *do* carry some hydrogen fuel.

More specifically, the speeds of Wing Commander ships are determined by two things: the mass of the ship (as more mass requires more force—and therefore more fuel—to push it around) and the amount of hydrogen in the surrounding areas of space. ConFed designers attempt to

keep ship masses to an absolute minimum, but beyond a certain point, there's nothing that can be done to further shrink a spacecraft. What about the other part of the equation, the hydrogen? As far back as the 1970's, Terran astronomers found that there was about one hydrogen atom per cubic meter in open space. That's pretty much a fixed number. Therefore, ship speeds are constrained by two immutable things—ship mass and hydrogen density in the universe. (There is actually a third determining factor, reactor efficiency, but leave that out for the moment.)

A spaceship in the Wing Commander universe, therefore, can essentially travel at some maximum speed for as long as it likes, and that maximum speed gets smaller as the ship gets bigger. Some ships *do*, however, carry some hydrogen reserve, and that reserve can be fed to the reactor, producing briefly-sustainable, higher velocities. The device required to do this high-speed fuel injection is called an *afterburner*, mainly for reasons of tradition—in the case of fusion/ion-powered spaceships, there is none of the unused fuel in the exhaust that once provided fodder for older atmospheric craft's afterburners.

Ships typically have three speeds: a cruising speed, which is a sustainable velocity using only spaceborne hydrogen; a maximum speed, the maximum sustainable velocity using only spaceborne hydrogen; and an afterburner speed, the speed attainable using the extra hydrogen reserve and the afterburner fuel injector, assuming, again, that the ship is equipped with an afterburner. For example, a Ferret cruises at 200 kps, but can, due to its low mass, sustain 500 kps for an indefinite period of time, and can do 1500 kps with the afterburners engaged. (There is only one ship in the Wing Commander universe that can outdo a Ferret's speed, and that ship—the Wraith—appears only in *Academy*.)

Ship speed can be reduced fairly quickly—press the Backspace key, and your ship will be motionless in about three seconds.

When flying in Wing Commander, you'll usually dogfight at your maximum speed, except when you're trying to stay on an enemy's tail. For example, suppose you're flying a Rapier against a bunch of Jalthis. Jalthis have an extremely dangerous set of forward guns, just two shots from which are usually all that's necessary to destroy your ship. On the other hand, Jalthis are slow and not terribly maneuverable, and



badly armored from the back. So the best approach is to use your more-maneuverable, faster ship to get behind the Jalthi and *stay* behind the Jalthi, then pick it off with your guns. (In general, do not use missiles against fighter ships—but there’s more on that in Chapter 4, *Tactics in Wing Commander*.) That’s a good strategy, but it doesn’t always work; the Jalthis will sometimes see you rushing up to them at the Rapier’s maximum speed of 450 kps, and so they just throttle back to 250—and wait for you to ram them, destroying your ship. As a result, it’s a good idea to drop back to 350–400 kps when fighting either Jalthis or Granthas. This does not apply, unfortunately, to the Jalkehis and Grikaths that you’ll meet in the Wing Commander II universe; they have some deadly tail guns, and you can’t hang on their tail for more than a second or two unless you want to be on the receiving end of a deadly hail of neutrons. In all of the games, however, you can attack Dorkirs, Lumbaris, Ralaris, Fralthis, Dorkathi, Kamekhs, and Snakeirs by getting on their tails and dropping down to about 100 kps, then blasting away at them.

The other time that you’ll slow down is to escort slower ships. On most escort missions, your autonav will set your speed to 100 kps. When defending a slower ship, however, you should speed up to attack your charge’s assailants, or you’ll never manage to destroy the enemy before they destroy the ship you’re supposed to be defending.

SHIELDS AND ARMOR

Part of the business of being a galactic hero is in being able to not only dish it out, but to take it—“it,” of course, being laser bolts, plasma blasts, and the odd missile. A force-field generator not only repels enemy weaponry, it also maintains hull integrity: A hull breach can be temporarily “sealed” by the shields. (This explains why it’s possible to take some awesome blasts and still maintain life support systems.)

The shields work by building a shell of force around your ship, a shell that is diminished by enemy fire. But its strength can be replenished by your ship’s shield generator, *if* the shield generator is given time to rebuild the shields. Too many fledgling pilots dive into a melee of enemy ships, trade fire with one enemy until the enemy’s destroyed, and then go right on to the next enemy ship. This is a bad idea for two reasons.

First, the shields should be given a few moments to rebuild; watch your shield status lights for that information. Second, the gun's blast capacitors should be allowed to recharge to their fullest. There is no dishonor in running for a moment or two to catch your breath, then returning to the fray!

Early ships did not use force-field shields, but instead used armor made of either duraplast (a plastic/ceramic blend that can tolerate high temperatures) or the superior durasteel alloy. Armor was rated in centimeters of durasteel or durasteel equivalent. That tradition continues to this day not only when rating armor, but also in rating shields. Most modern ships not only have shields, they also carry some armor—sort of a backup protection device. Shields regenerate in the course of battle given time, but, of course, armor does *not*. If you never let your shields get down to zero, then you'll never need your armor. But still, it's a good thing to have armor—and as much as you can get.

MANEUVERING JETS

Speed is good for ships, and so is armor—but a fast, armor-plated ship that can't steer is just an expensive meteor. A good dogfighting ship needs to be able to maneuver, to pitch, yaw, and roll. *Roll* means to be able to move around a central axis that extends from the back of the ship to the front of the ship. You roll on most ships with the > and < keys, or by holding down the afterburner button on the joystick while leaning it to the right or left. Learn to use the < and > keys, as the joystick maneuver is hard to do without also setting off the afterburners—which, if you're in the process of docking, could be a real disaster—ever slam into the side of a capital ship at 1200 kps? (I have, unfortunately, thanks to this joystick control.) By the way, the roll keys don't work in Privateer; you must use the joystick to roll—so don't roll in Privateer. You roll to avoid enemy gunfire, or to line yourself up for docking with the *Tiger's Claw* in the first three games.

Pitch means to raise or lower the nose of the craft. *Yaw* means to rotate around the ship's vertical axis—essentially, to turn left or right without banking. You pitch and yaw to change direction, to avoid obstacles, or to line up your guns for a shot. Better pitch and yaw capabilities mean that



you can zoom at a target, firing continuously at it, and pull out at the last second. Some ships, such as the Scimitar, have miserable roll/pitch/yaw capabilities; I've splattered myself on the side of a few Ralaris when my maneuvering jets didn't respond quickly enough in a Scimitar.

Roll, pitch, and yaw capabilities are measured in degrees of turn per second. For example, a responsive ship may be able to maneuver at 10 degrees per second; such a ship would require 36 seconds to make a full 360-degree turn.

Maneuverability is essential in dogfights. Once an enemy's on your tail, you've only got a few seconds to get loose of his sights—or die. The only ways out of the situation are either to be much faster than that enemy, or to be able to turn better than him. Once you start turning, he'll turn with you—but if you're more maneuverable, then you can actually turn the tables, and find your sights resting comfortably on *his* tail!

GUNS, MINES, AND MISSILES

Nearly every ship has at least *some* form of offensive protection, whether it's the lame "love taps" administered by a laser gun, or the virtually unstoppable Mace tactical nuclear missile. Chapter 3 examines these weapons in detail.

TRACTOR BEAM

Now and then you'll come across some piece of space flotsam or jetsam—a data pod, an ejected pilot, or space salvage. A tractor beam will allow you to pull in any free-floating object and place it in your cargo hold. You can learn more about using the tractor beam in Chapter 3.

REPAIR DROID

Most of the ships in the Wing Commander universe have some kind of self-repairing facilities. The game for which self-repair is most important is Privateer, which has ships that do not repair themselves unless you buy a Repair Droid for 30,000 credits. It's money well spent, particularly on long missions. You do not have to do anything to "activate" the

Repair Droid; it fixes damaged ship subsystems automatically. Those repairs can take time, however, so sometimes it's a good idea to find a quiet place, shut down the engines and shields, hit **R** to monitor repairs, and just wait until everything's fixed before moving on.

The Repair Droid cannot repair damaged guns or armor, as the Droid only works inside the ship, and armor and armament are outside on the hull. You've got to wait to get to a ship-refitting facility to get guns, missiles, and armor fixed.

ECM (ELECTRONIC COUNTERMEASURES) PODS

Many tasks in Privateer require dogfighting with up to eight ships. When you've got eight ships shooting at you, there's hardly time to dodge missiles, too. So your friendly local ship outfitter will be pleased to sell you an electronic countermeasure pod. Such a pod sends out signals that confuse image-recognition, heat-seeking, and friend-or-foe missiles. ECM pods don't guarantee that you'll be protected from missiles, but they seem to shield from most missiles. Of course, a dumb-fire missile will not be affected by this, as it's not guided by any intelligence—it just gets pointed and fired.

You don't have to do anything to use ECM; the mere fact that you've got it installed automatically drives missiles away.

A NOTE ON THE TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

You'll find when reading the remainder of this chapter that some of the technical specifications—the yaw, pitch, and roll characteristics in particular—do not match the numbers provided by the Origin documentation.

The reason for the differences between the numbers presented here and the ones claimed by Origin—and there are some big differences—is because the Origin documentation is sometimes wrong. Experimentation with ConFed ships showed that maneuvering values quoted in the



5–10 degree/second range were way off, and that some ships can maneuver at 90 degrees per second.

It was possible to directly measure the turning characteristics of Confed ships by just piloting them and timing how long it took to do a complete 360 degree roll, pitch, and yaw, but it wasn't possible to do that with Kilrathi ships (except the Dralathi), as you never get to fly Kilrathi ships. As a result, I've just made guesses based on watching Kilrathi ships fly.

THE SHIPS OF WING COMMANDER I

The first three Wing Commander games—Wing Commander I, Secret Missions 1, and Secret Missions 2—offer encounters with twenty different kinds of ships. Some are fearsome, some are troublesome, but all are important in one way or another.

HORNET

The first ship you'll fly in both Wing Commander I and Secret Missions 1 is the Hornet. When I first started playing Wing Commander, I didn't like the Hornet much, as it represented low rank to me. But flying it more and more makes you appreciative of its merits—it's quick and very maneuverable. Additionally, it has excellent visibility, perhaps the best of all the ships that you'll fly in the Wing Commander I, Secret Missions 1, and Secret Missions 2 series. Sure, a Rapier has big guns and lots of missiles, but all that firepower sometimes seems to take away some of the challenge.

Two of my favorite missions are the first two from Secret Missions 1. They involve escorts which must be defended against Krants and Salthis, and strikes against Lumbaris and Dorkirs. In a Rapier, these missions would be a piece of cake. But winning them in a Hornet requires a delicate balance of afterburner fuel usage, judicious use of shields, and good flying.

When flying the Hornet, use its maneuverability and speed. You can outfly many missiles—don't hesitate to do so. Sell your armor dearly; don't stay in anybody's sights long enough to let your shields get battered down. If you lose your shields and your armor, then it's likely that your comm unit will go first, followed by your missiles. After that, your guns will go. You mustn't let this happen, as that would leave you with only one way of destroying enemies: ramming them. If you must ram enemy ships—Salthis are quite rammable—you should be sure to first wait for your shields to recharge, then ram with full shield power, then fly around and recharge fully, then ram again. Ram to the side of the enemy ship if possible, as that is where their shields and armor are weakest.

Table 2.1 shows the specifications for the Hornet.

TABLE 2.1: *Hornet Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Light Fighter
Length	20 meters
Mass	12.5 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	420 kps
Cruise Velocity	300 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1240 kps
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	72 dps

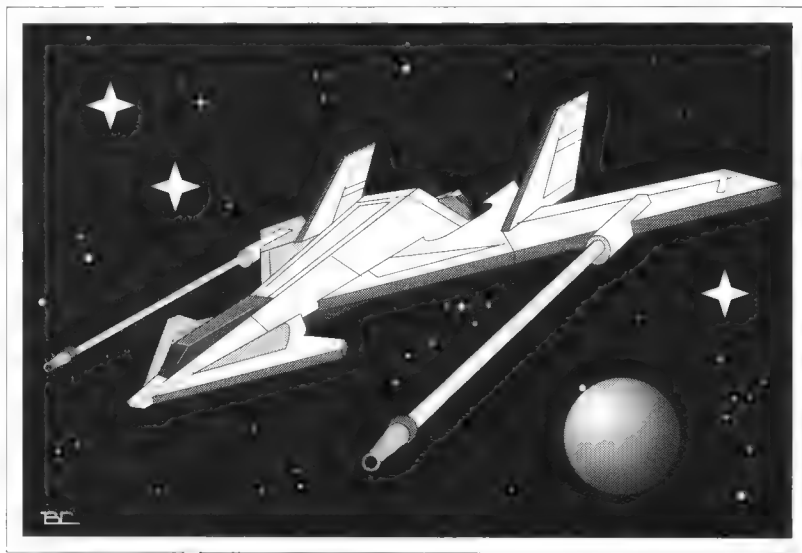


TABLE 2.1: *Hornet Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Yaw	72 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannon (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (2), Heat-Seeking Missile
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 3cm; Aft Shield: 3cm; Front: 3cm; Right: 3cm; Left: 3cm; Rear: 3cm

SCIMITAR

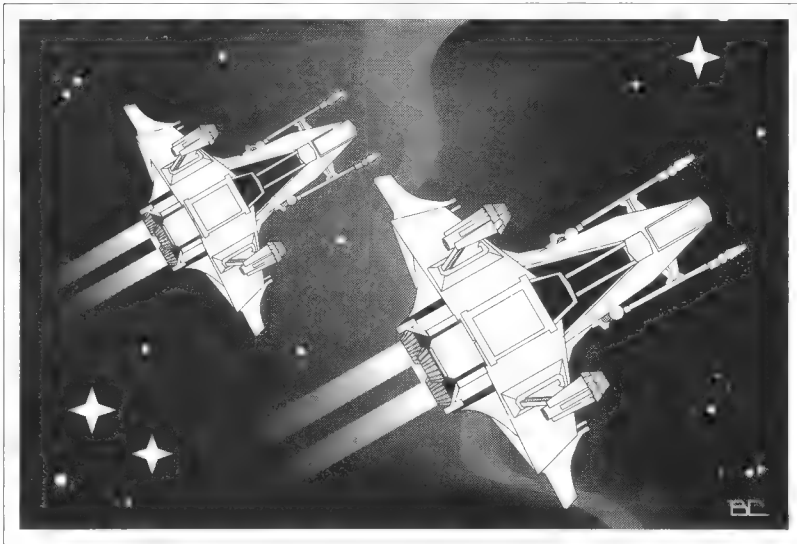
If you're not a very good pilot, then you'll like the Scimitar.

Why? Simple. Because there's not a lot in the Scimitar to interest a good pilot. It's not very maneuverable, has a lousy top speed, and doesn't have very good missiles.

That said, however, the Scimitar is interesting in that it has no forward or rear armor at all; it's all shields, and the shields regenerate fairly rapidly. And there's a lot of shield power—you can go head-to-head with a

Salthi, Dralthi, or Krant, and usually kill it before it kills you. Then you can fly around, recharge, and do it again—if you don't run out of afterburner fuel in the process. The Scimitar is also endowed with two mass-driver cannons, both of which can do a fair amount of damage—three shots usually destroys a Dralthi.

If you're flying a Scimitar, make sure your shields are charged up, then bore right



into your target at a fairly low speed—stay around 200/250 kps. Keep the guns on your target, and you may be able to burn its shields down and destroy it on the first pass. If you fly too quickly, then you'll pass it by too quickly, forcing a second pass. By the time you make that second pass, however, the enemy may have made use of your lower maneuverability, and may be on your tail—your “six,” in pilot lingo. (This advice does not apply when defending; in that case, you've got no choice but to rush in with guns blazing. The Scimitar may be a lousy ship for battle, but a Drayman's even worse, and you've got to defend that Drayman.) When attacking capital ships, remember that you've got tons of shield power, and a gun (the mass driver) that's only good at a range of 3000 kilometers. Get in close, drop the speed to 100 kps, and blast away at the capital ship.

Table 2.2 shows the specifications for the Scimitar.

TABLE 2.2: *Scimitar Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	25 meters
Mass	16 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	360 kps
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1120 kps
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	45 dps
Maximum Yaw	45 dps
Maximum Roll	51 dps
Ship's Weapons	Gatling Mass Driver Cannon (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (2), Heat-Seeking Missiles (3)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 4 cm; Aft Shield: 4cm; Front: 6 cm; Right: 5 cm; Left: 5 cm; Rear: 6 cm.

RAPTOR

The Raptor's a fun ship. Neutron guns and mass drivers make a nice pair of weapons. With two of each of those guns, you'll "win a lot of arguments" with the Kilrathi, so to speak. The Raptor's top speed is fairly good, and its maneuverability is actually worse than the Scimitar, but it's not bad. And if you like missiles, it's got a pile of them. It does have one flaw, however—visibility. The view out the cockpit is just not very good; only the Orion and the Dralthi have less viewing area among the ships you'll fly in the Wing Commander universe.

Practice well with the Raptor, as it has two very difficult and rewarding missions. First is the Gwenhyvar mission, and second is the Sivar

flyby, where you're offered the option of toasting six Jalthis. (I won't say any more about these missions, in case you haven't gotten to them yet.) You actually need not destroy the Jalthis—but it's the mark of a real flier to splash them all, rather than to run away.

When flying the Raptor, use the strength of the shields to make up for the reduced maneuverability. Keep both guns enabled all the time, and engage the enemy

from close range, using afterburners to keep him from escaping and recharging his shields.

Table 2.3 shows the specifications for the Raptor.

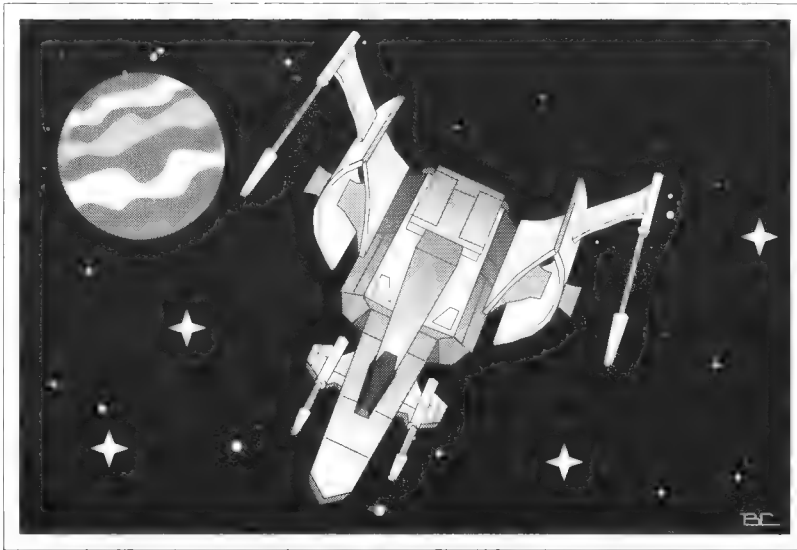
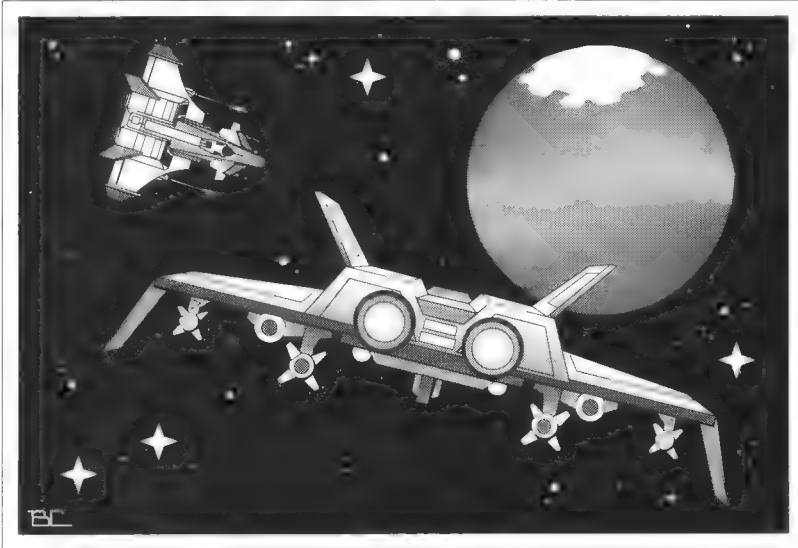


TABLE 2.3: *Raptor Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Fighter
Length	36 meters
Mass	20 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	60 dps
Maximum Yaw	72 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps
Ship's Weapons	Neutron Guns (2), Gatling Mass Driver Cannon (2), Heat-Seeking Missiles (2), Spiculum IR (Image-Recognition) Missiles (2), Pilum FF (Friend-or-Foe) Missile, Porcupine Space Mine
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 7cm; Aft Shield: 7 cm; Front: 8 cm; Right: 6 cm; Left: 6cm; Rear: 8 cm.

RAPIER

The Rapier is not as heavily armored as the Raptor, but it's quite maneuverable. Hunter comments that it's got "neutron guns for the close-in work, and lasers for the distance shots." Personally, I don't find the long-distance guns argument very compelling. As I've said before, most serious fighting happens close-up, within 3000 kilometers. I wouldn't choose to trade lower power for greater distance—which is just the kind of trade that the laser represents. The Rapier would be a better craft if it were outfitted with, perhaps, four neutron guns.



Visibility is good on the Rapier, as is the number of missiles that it can accommodate. Speed is quite good, faster in fact than the Hornet. Just one piece of advice, however—be careful not to overcontrol the Rapier. It responds so quickly that someone who's coming off a bunch of missions in a Rap-tor may be used to the relative unresponsiveness of that ship, and so may oversteer when flying a Rapier.

Table 2.4 shows the specifications for the Rapier.

TABLE 2.4: *Rapier Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	24 meters
Mass	13.5 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	450 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1300 kps
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	60 dps
Maximum Yaw	72 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps

TABLE 2.4: *Rapier Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannon (2), Neutron Guns (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (2), Spiculum IR (Image-Recognition) Missile, Pilum FF (Friend-or-Foe) Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 7cm; Aft Shield: 7cm. Front: 5cm; Right: 3cm; Left: 3cm; Rear: 4cm

DRAYMAN MARK I

The ship that you'll most commonly escort is the Drayman. It's a fairly tough old bird, so it can take some pounding. That's good news, as you'll sometimes have to defend these against a half dozen Salthis or a small wing of Krants.

Although the Drayman has a number of flak guns, they're usually not of much help.

Table 2.5 shows the specifications for the Drayman.

TABLE 2.5: *Drayman Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Transport (configurable as Freighter or Tanker)
Length	96 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes

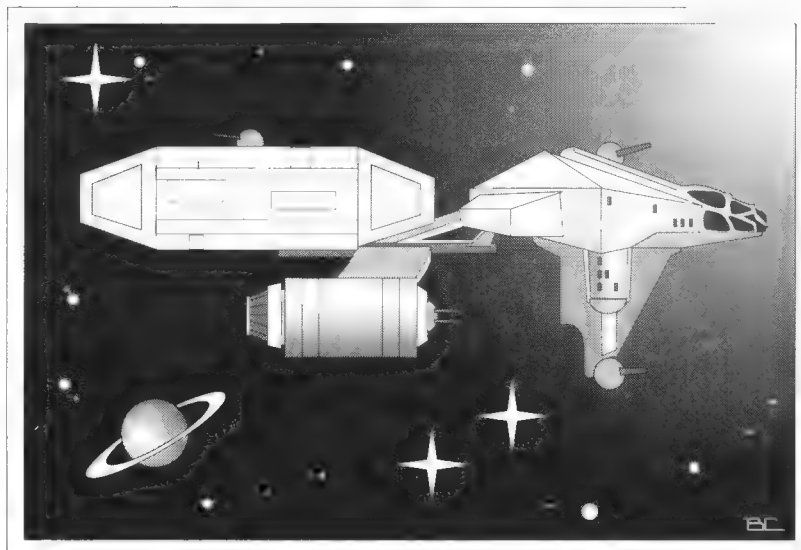
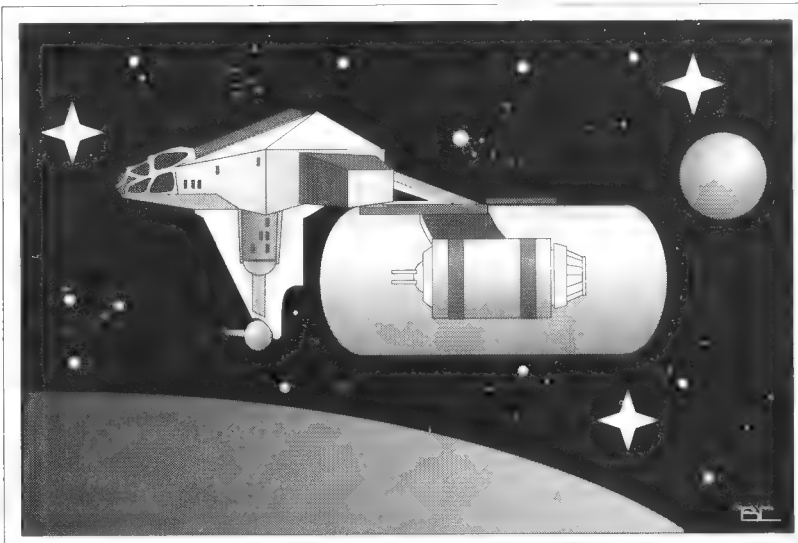


TABLE 2.5: *Drayman Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Bad
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Classified
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 9cm; Aft Shield: 9 cm; Front: 8 cm; Right: 6 cm; Left: 6cm; Rear: 8 cm.



DILIGENT

The Diligent appears in one mission in Secret Missions 1. It's basically just a re-configured Drayman.

Table 2.6 shows the specifications for the Diligent.

TABLE 2.6: *Diligent Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Transport (configurable as Freighter or Tanker)
Length	96 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Bad
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Classified
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 9cm; Aft Shield: 9 cm; Front: 8 cm; Right: 6 cm; Left: 6cm; Rear: 8 cm.

EXETER

Like a Drayman, but with more shields. You'll mainly encounter these when you escort them. One mission will require that you attack and destroy one of these ships; just handle it like any capital ship. (See Chapter 4, *Tactics in Wing Commander*, for more information on attacking capital ships.)

Table 2.7 shows the specifications for the Exeter.

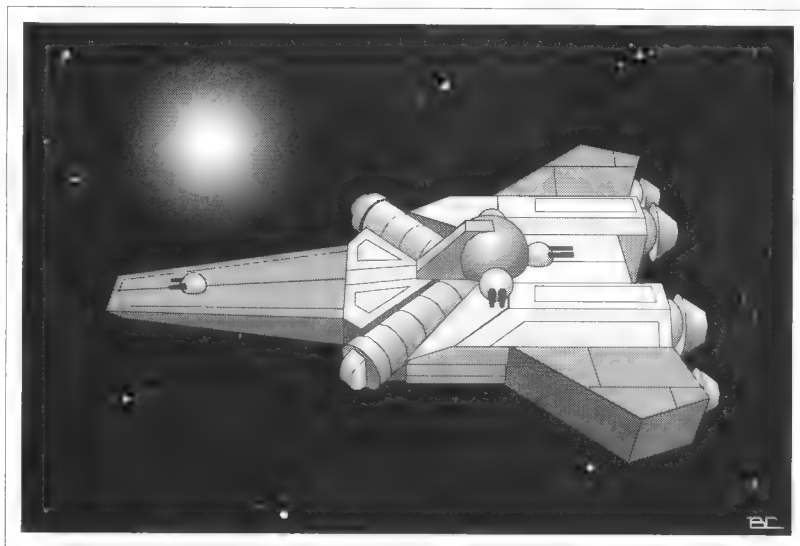


TABLE 2.7: *Exeter Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Destroyer
Length	360 meters
Mass	8,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Classified
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 25cm; Aft Shield: 25 cm; Front: 22 cm; Right: 20 cm; Left: 20 cm; Rear: 20 cm.



VENTURE

Like an Exeter, but with less shielding. Ventures are supposed to be fighting ships, but they seem helpless as Draymen when you're escorting them.

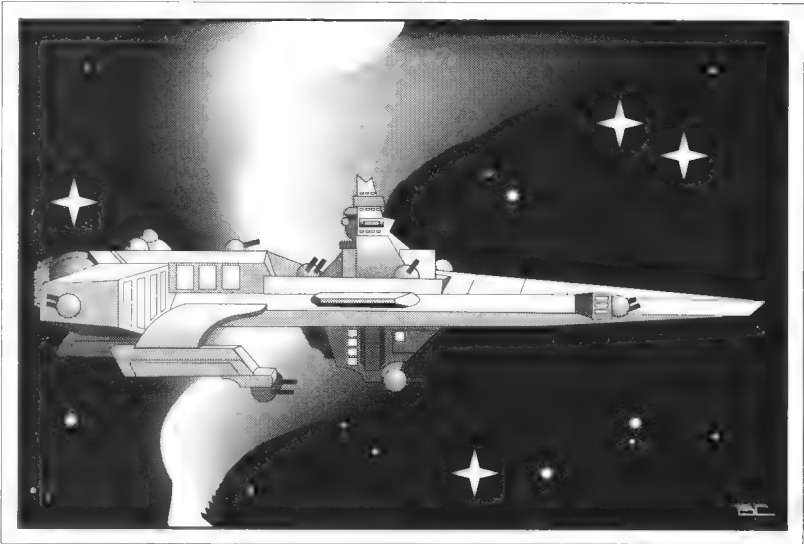
Table 2.8 shows the specifications for the Venture.

TABLE 2.8: *Venture Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Corvette
Length	80 meters
Mass	1,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	200 kps
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	40 dps
Maximum Yaw	40 dps
Maximum Roll	40 dps
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannon (2), Pilum FF (Friend-or-Foe) Missile, Heat-Seeking Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 10 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 9 cm; Right: 8 cm; Left: 8cm; Rear: 8 cm.

TIGER'S CLAW/
BENGAL-CLASS
CARRIER

The *Tiger's Claw* is your carrier, the place that all your missions begin and end. You'll have to sometimes defend the *Claw*, but don't feel that you must rush *Claw* defense missions; the *Claw* is nearly impossible to destroy. Try it sometime—get a Rapier, set it on





full guns, and blaze away. It'll take quite a while to destroy it, at least ten times longer than it takes to destroy something big like a starbase.

Table 2.9 shows the specifications for the *Tiger's Claw*.

TABLE 2.9: *Tiger's Claw Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Bengal—Strike Carrier
Length	700 meters
Mass	80,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	130 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	5 dps
Maximum Yaw	5 dps
Maximum Roll	5 dps
Ship's Weapons	Dual Laser Turrets (8), 104 Fighters
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 21cm; Aft Shield: 21 cm; Front: 24 cm; Right: 25 cm; Left: 25 cm; Rear: 20 cm

SALTHI

The Salthi is the Hornet of the Kilrathi fleet: fast and maneuverable. Armed only with lasers and a missile or two, the biggest threat that the Salthi presents is in its tendency to appear in large groups. Dogfighting with five Salthi in amongst some asteroids can be quite a challenge. Most important when dogfighting Salthis: Find a target and lock your targeting computer onto it. (If you don't lock onto it, you'll lose it, as they fly so fast.) Then follow it, using afterburners as necessary, and hound it

until you destroy it. Salthis don't have much shields, but their shields regenerate fast, and if you let a damaged one slip away, it's liable to run away or to recharge its shields and come back with no net damage, ready to assist in your destruction.

Take a look at a Salthi's side view from your cockpit. It looks like a Ford Escort. Could it be that there's someone at Origin who doesn't like Escorts?



Table 2.10 shows the specifications for the Salthi.

TABLE 2.10: *Salthi Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Light Fighter
Length	24 meters
Mass	12 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	480 kps
Cruise Velocity	300 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1400 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	115 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps

**TABLE 2.10:** *Salthi Specifications (continued)***SPECIFICATIONS**

Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannon (2), Dumb-Fire Missile
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 3.5 cm; Aft Shield: 3.5 cm; Front: 3 cm; Right: 1.5 cm; Left: 1.5 cm; Rear: 2 cm

DRALTHI AND DRALTHI MARK II

It's not very clear what Dralthis are good for. They're armored a bit better than Salthis, but not much better, and they don't accelerate well. As a result, these big round ships are essentially flying bull's-eyes.

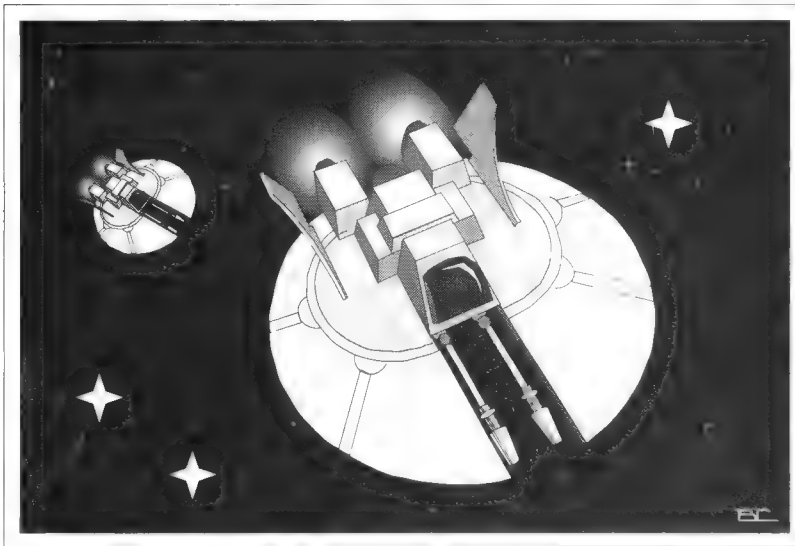
When attacking Dralthis, you'll find that they have a tendency, like many Wing Commander ships, to just bore right in. The weak lasers that constitute the entirety of Dralthis armament are of little enough concern to you that it's probably acceptable to just "play chicken" with a

Dralthi—just fly right at it, guns blazing. You'll typically destroy it before it knocks down your shields; no fancy flying required.

The Dralthis Mark IIs are a different story. They're equipped with mass drivers, making head-to-head confrontations a very bad idea. Attack them from the side; the Mark IIs have better weaponry, but they're no more maneuverable.

What about when you've got to fly one of those

things? *Arghh*. They're slow, weak-shielded pigs that make Scimitars look good. (They are more maneuverable than a Scimitar.) My advice is to do



the absolute minimum necessary to finish the Dralhti missions—remember that victory doesn't always require kills. The Dralhti missions usually require that you hit nav points, not destroy capital ships. (That's usually—one mission requires that you destroy a Ralari in order to win, and another gives extra brownie points for wasting a trio of Snakeirs.) Use the afterburners to keep yourself out of trouble. In some missions, it really is acceptable to just run like a rabbit through the enemy, shooting at no one.

Table 2.11 shows the specifications for the Dralhti.

TABLE 2.11: *Dralhti Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	28 meters
Mass	14 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	230 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	72 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannon (2) Porcupine Mines (3), Heat-Seeking Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 5 cm; Aft Shield: 5 cm; Front: 4.5 cm; Right: 3 cm; Left: 3 cm; Rear: 3.5 cm

KRANT

The Krant is the Kilrathi workhorse. Krants appear frequently as escorts to Kilrathi capital ships. They're fairly well armored—much better

than Dralthis and Salthis—and show fairly good speed, although they're not as maneuverable as Salthis. They're basically the analog of the Raptor on the ConFed side.

Krants and Salthis are the most deadly ships in the first three games.

The speed and armament of Krants, coupled with their tendency to show up in groups of three to six, together pack a real wallop.

When attacking a Krant, either come straight at it, weaving to avoid its guns, or get on its tail. Its relative lack of maneuverability will mean that you get a fair amount of time to shoot out its rear shields and armor before it can turn. Watch out for its image-recognition missiles; if you're near a

Krant when the missile is launched, try to destroy the missile in flight early on, while it's not yet up to speed.

Table 2.12 shows the specifications for the Krant.

TABLE 2.12: *Krant Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	32 meters
Mass	16.6 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	360 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1080 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Good

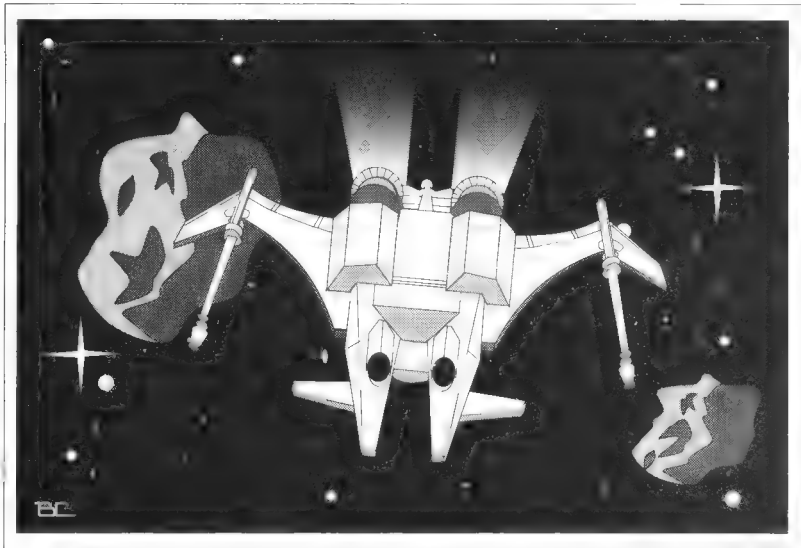


TABLE 2.12: *Krant Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Pitch	72 dps
Maximum Yaw	56 dps
Maximum Roll	56 dps
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannon (2), Friend-or-Foe Missile. Heat-Seeking Missiles (3)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 8 cm; Aft Shield: 8 cm; Front: 9 cm; Right: 8 cm; Left: 8 cm; Rear: 10 cm

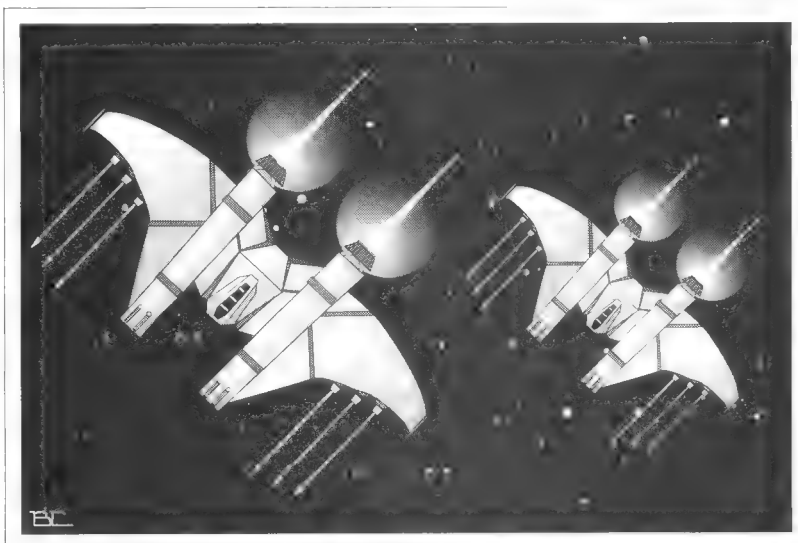
JALTHI

Discussions in the *Tiger's Claw* bar lead you to think that the Jalthi is a ship to be feared and loathed.

It's not.

The Jalthi is basically a Scimitar with lots of guns. Not terribly fast, with abysmal turning characteristics, a Jalthi is Death itself if it is pointed directly at you and firing. Its barrage of six laser bolts can be quite devastating if it is successful in hitting you—but it's easy to afterburner out of a Jalthi's reach, then come around and hit it from the side and rear. Just stay out of a Jalthi's direct sights, and you're okay...but let it land a few volleys on you, and you won't have to worry about clean shirts any more.

When flying a faster ship (such as a Rapiers or a Hornet), slow down to about 350 kps when chasing Jalthis, or





their slower speed will mean that you'll soon overtake the Jalathi that you're following—and you'll provide it with a quite easy-to-hit target. Best bet with a Jalathi is to first charge up your gun capacitors to the max, then come in from the side or the rear, unloading on the Jalathi at top firing rate. Two passes and you'll usually kill the target. Oddly enough, once you've begun doing damage to the Jalathi, you can often bore right in on it without it firing on you; it seems (with almost all the Kilrathi fighters, not just the Jalathi) that once you've begun to knock them about, then they lose their stomach for fighting.

Table 2.13 shows the specifications for the Jalathi.

TABLE 2.13: *Jalathi Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Fighter
Length	32 meters
Mass	22 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	280 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	840 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	40 dps
Maximum Yaw	40 dps
Maximum Roll	40 dps
Ship's Weapons	Neutron Guns (3), Friend-or-Foe Missiles (2), Heat-Seeking Missile, Laser Cannons (3)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 16 cm; Aft Shield: 16 cm; Front: 20 cm; Right: 17 cm; Left: 17 cm; Rear: 10cm

GRATHA

Despite their difference in looks, treat a Gratha like a Jalthi. They have mass drivers and lasers, and they're smart enough to switch over to the mass drivers when they're near you. That said, however, they're not too maneuverable, nor are they very fast. Ride their tails and pound them with a full gun capacitor, and you can usually kill a Gratha without too much work. Be careful, however—they like to try to ram you, as they've got lots of mass and shield power. But you should be more maneuverable than them, so just keep your eyes open, and you'll be able to avoid their attempts to ram you.

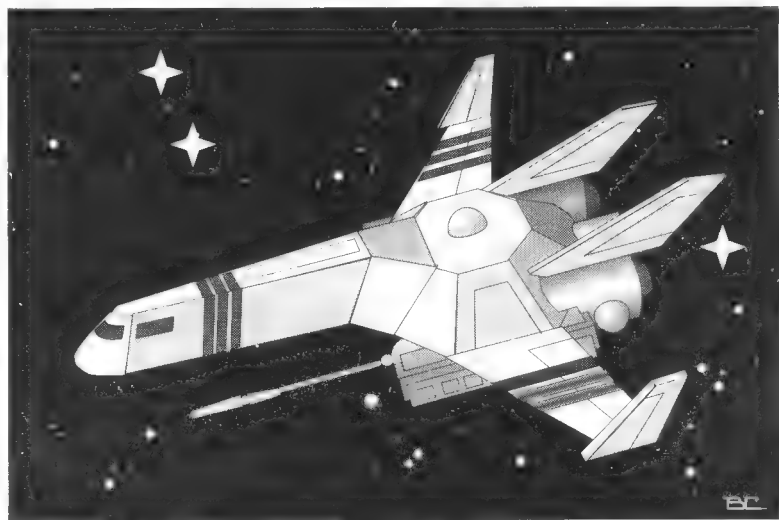


Table 2.14 shows the specifications for the Gratha.

TABLE 2.14: *Gratha Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Fighter
Length	36 meters
Mass	8 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	320 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	960 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	50 dps

TABLE 2.14: *Gratha Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Yaw	50 dps
Maximum Roll	50 dps
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannon (2), Mass Driver Cannon (2), Image-Recognition Missile, Heat-Seeking Missiles (3), Porcupine Mines (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 11 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 15 cm; Right: 10 cm; Left: 10 cm; Rear: 14 cm

HHRISS

Fast, brutish, and cruel—that's the best way to sum up a Hhriss. Since they won't stand still like a capital ship, it's not possible to measure exactly how good their shields are, but it's darn tough to kill one of these things.

The Hhriss are armed, like the Raptor, with the two best close-in guns: the neutron gun and the mass driver. That means that they can't attack you from a great distance away, but then that's not much of an advantage—their speed is good

enough that they can probably get close to you as quickly as they want to.

The Hhriss seem almost as maneuverable as a Salthi. They are armed with some kind of intelligent missile.

To attack a Hhriss, stay close in, use afterburners to stay on its tail, and pound it with full guns, whatever kind you've got. Use your targeting computer to lock



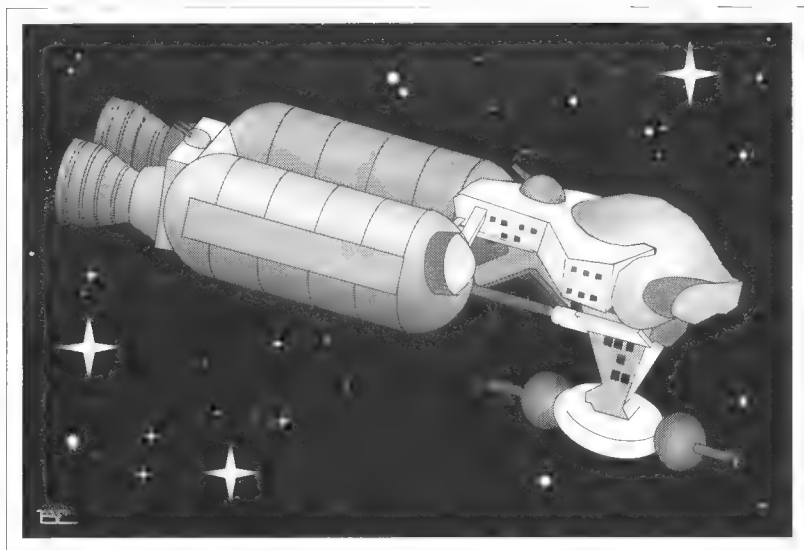
onto the Hhriss you're dogfighting with, and stay with it until you kill it, because killing a Hhriss will exact a cost in afterburner fuel, and if you let the Hhriss run away and recharge its shields, then you've just wasted afterburner fuel, as you're going to have to run after it and hammer down its shields again like you just did. Do not engage a Hhriss head-to-head, as they've got good shields and excellent close-in guns; for example, pitting the Rapier's laser/neutron gun combination against a Hhriss's mass-driver/neutron-gun combination in a game of head-to-head "chicken" will hurt the Rapier more than it will the Hhriss. Dance around the Hhriss, hit it to the sides and rear, and you'll kill it, but it'll take time.

The Hhriss only appear in Secret Missions 2.

Table 2.15 shows the specifications for the Hhriss.

TABLE 2.15: *Hhriss Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	12 meters
Mass	14 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	480 kps
Cruise Velocity	300 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1400 kps
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	115 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Neutron Guns (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 16 cm; Aft Shield: 16 cm; Front: 18 cm; Right: 16 cm; Left: 16 cm; Rear: 20 cm.



DORKIR

The Dorkir is a Kilrathi Drayman. The Kilrathi use the Dorkir both as a freighter and as a troop transport. Armed only with flak guns and apparently no missiles, the Dorkir is fairly easy to destroy once you've eliminated its fighter escort. As with all Kilrathi capital ships, it's easiest to destroy the Dorkir by attacking its rear. About 17 consecutive dual-fired laser bolts seem sufficient to destroy a Dorkir.

Table 2.16 shows the specifications for the Dorkir.

TABLE 2.16: *Dorkir Specifications*

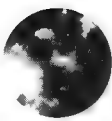
SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Transport (configurable as either Freighter or Tanker)
Length	104 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Bad
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps

Ship's Weapons	Turreted Laser, Porcupine Mines (3)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 17 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 9 cm; Right: 9 cm; Left: 9 cm; Rear: 6 cm

A Lumbari is a slightly modified version of a Dorkir. It first appeared in Secret Missions 1's first mission, and appears periodically in Secret Missions 1 and 2.

Like the Dorkir, the Lumbari can be destroyed by around 17 consecutive dual-fired laser bolts to the rear.

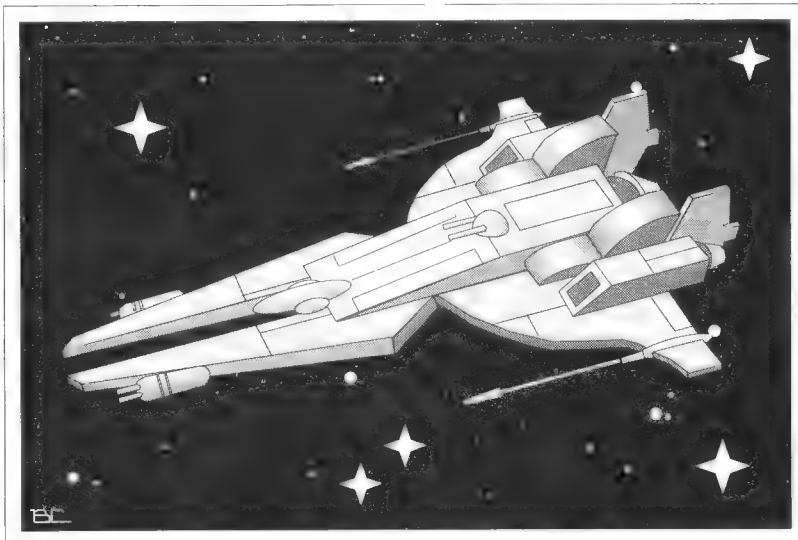


**TABLE 2.17:** *Lumbari Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Transport
Length	104 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Bad
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Turreted Laser, Porcupine Mines (3)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 17 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 9 cm; Right: 9 cm; Left: 9 cm; Rear: 6 cm

RALARI

The Ralari is the Kilrathi equivalent of an Exeter ship. It's got decent flak guns and a few missiles, as well as a lot of shielding. Like most capital ships, it's not well defended from the rear, and so is best destroyed by a concerted pounding of the rear of the ship. About 50 consecutive dual-fired laser bolts will eliminate a Ralari.



When you're destroying a Ralari, you'll find that it takes several minutes to batter down its shields and armor; don't think that you can just swoop in, blast away, and watch an explosion. Ralaris have tough hides—and that's why it's so odd that the Ralari that you're supposed to defend at the Kurasawa 2 mission seems to explode so quickly. Oh, well; life isn't always fair.

Table 2.18 shows the specifications for the Ralari.

TABLE 2.18: *Ralari Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Destroyer
Length	344 meters
Mass	18,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Turreted Lasers (6), Porcupine Mine
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 20 cm; Aft Shield: 12 cm; Front: 20 cm; Right: 18 cm; Left: 18 cm; Rear: 9 cm

FRALTHI

The Fralthi is the Empire's ship carrier, the twin to the ConFed Bengal-class carriers like the *Tiger's Claw*. Reading the specifications on the Fralthi in the *Claw Marks* documentation that accompanies Wing Commander I leads you to believe that the Fralthi is a dangerous and nearly impossible-to-destroy ship.

Nothing is further from the truth.

The Fralthi is living proof of the old saw, “the bigger they are, the harder they fall.” It’s big, yes, and armored, yes, but it only has flak guns, and its turning characteristics can be measured in degrees per day. Take out a Fralthi’s fighter escort, park on its tail at about 80–100 kps, and just

blaze away. If it turns, turn with it. The flak guns may burn down your shields a bit; if so, then just move out of range, recharge the shields and guns, and come back. It’s silly to waste missiles on Fralthis (or most capital ships, for that matter), no matter what Iceman and Angel say in the *Tiger’s Claw* lounge.

And here’s another interesting thing about the Fralthi: it seems to only have about the same

shield/armor level as the Ralari. Both ship require about 50 consecutive dual-fired laser bursts to their rear sections to destroy them.

Table 2.19 shows the specifications for the Fralthi.

TABLE 2.19: *Fralthi Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Cruiser (configurable as Cruiser or Light Carrier)
Length	500 meters
Mass	20,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	180 kps
Cruise Velocity	120 kps

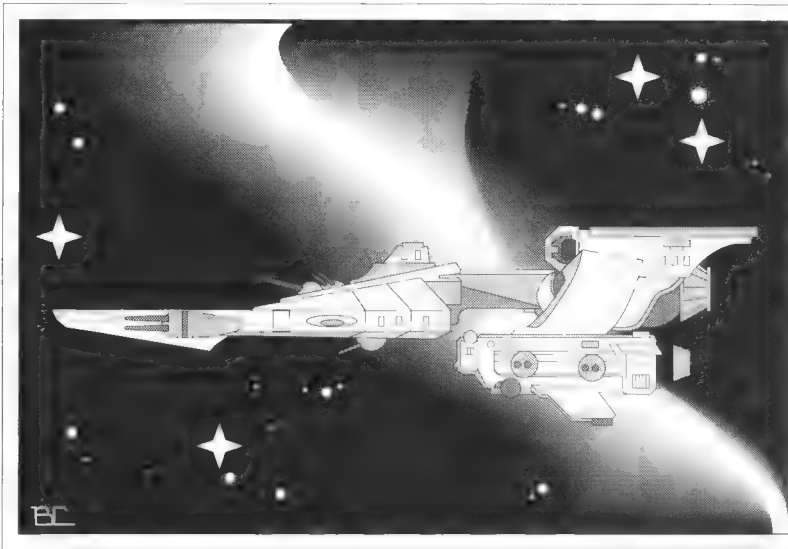


TABLE 2.19: *Fralthi Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Turreted Lasers (6), fighter complement of 20
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 27 cm; Aft Shield: 17 cm; Front: 28 cm; Right: 26 cm; Left: 26 cm; Rear: 14 cm

KILRATHI STARBASE

You'll meet two Kilrathi Starbases in the Wing Commander I games. They're heavily armored, but armed only with flak guns. When attacking a starbase, just pick off its fighter escort, then park off its hub and fire at it until it explodes. The shields on the starbase are about 40 percent stronger than those on the Fralthi—the starbase required 85 consecutive dual-fired laser bursts to destroy it. Starbases appear again in Wing Commander II, but there they've got anti-matter guns.

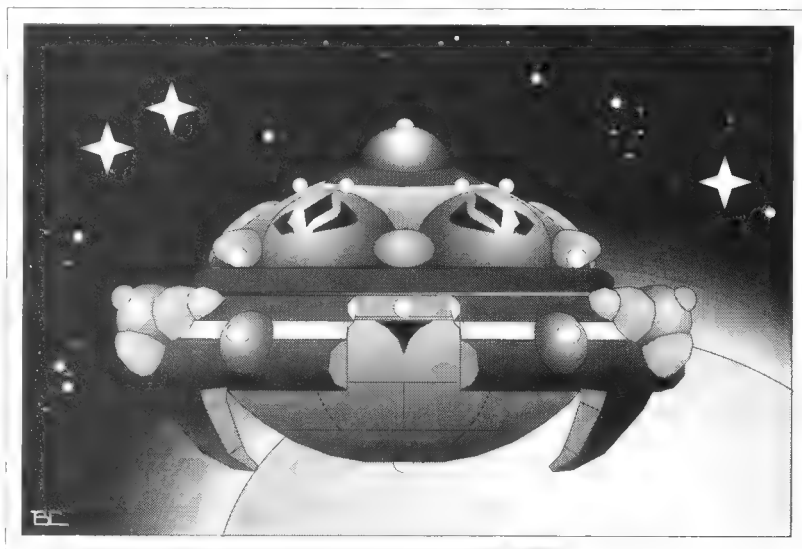
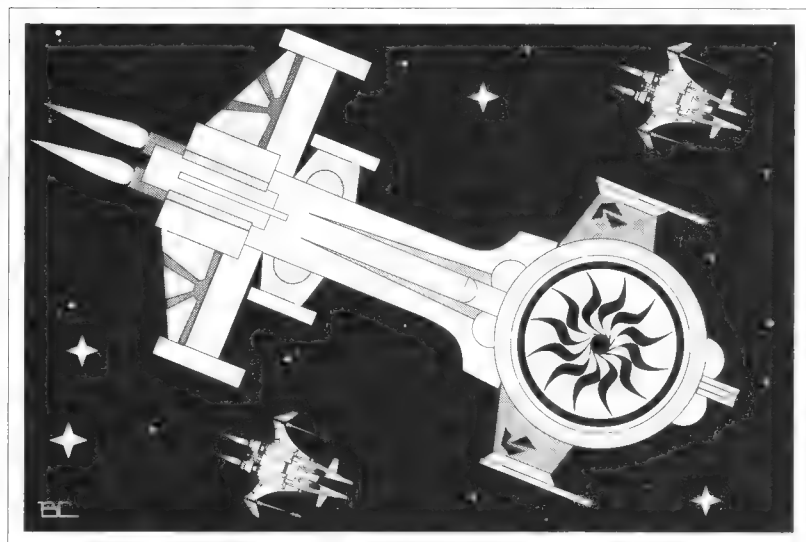


Table 2.20 shows the specifications for the Kilrathi.

**TABLE 2.20:** *Kilrathi Starbase Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Space Station
Radius	1,100 meters
Mass	240,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	NA
Cruise Velocity	NA
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	NA
Maximum Pitch	NA
Maximum Yaw	NA
Maximum Roll	NA
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannon (4), Anti-Matter Guns (2) (WC II only), full complement of fighters (approx. 100)
Ship's Armor	Fore and Aft Shield: Phase Shields; Front: 700 cm; Right: 700 cm; Left: 700 cm; Rear: 700 cm



SIVAR

The Sivar is the capital ship that you must destroy in order to successfully complete Secret Missions 1. You'll only meet one Sivar. The Sivar has about the same shield level as a starbase—about 80 consecutive dual-fired laser bursts will destroy it. It seems a trifle more maneuverable than other capital ships, but not a

lot more. Other than that, it's got flak guns and apparently no missiles. Attack it from the rear.

Table 2.21 shows the specifications for the Sivar.

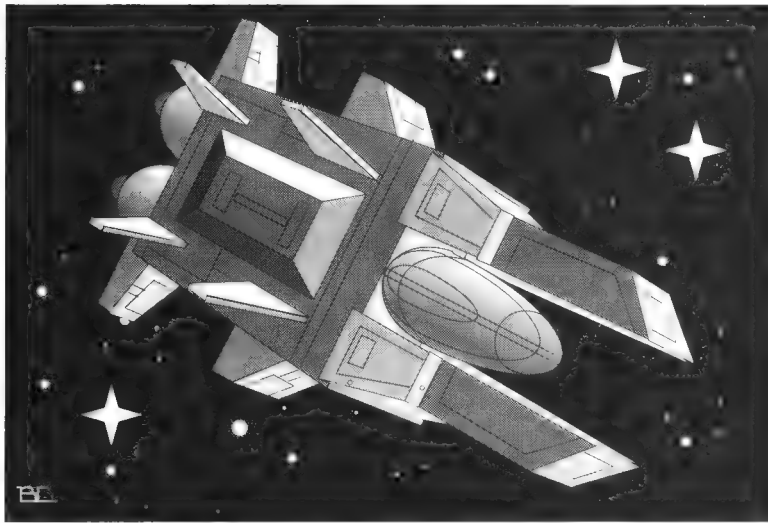
TABLE 2.21: *Sivar Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Dreadnought
Length	400 meters
Mass	19,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	180 kps
Cruise Velocity	120 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	15 dps
Maximum Yaw	15 dps
Maximum Roll	15 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannon (4)
Ship's Armor	Fore and Aft Shield: Phase Shields; Front: 700 cm; Right: 700 cm; Left: 700 cm; Rear: 700 cm

SNAKEIR

It's appropriate that the Snakeir first appears in the same mission as the Hhriss. They're two peas in a pod, in the sense that they're meaner and tougher than their earlier counterparts in the Wing Commander universe. The Snakeir is similar to the Ralari and Fralthi in that it's a capital ship, which means that it's got flak guns and a few missiles, and it can't turn very quickly.

It's tougher in that it seems able to pump out more flak than previous capital ships, and it has an unbelievable amount of armor. If you park



your ship on its tail—remember, the most weakly armored part of the ship—and lob dual-fired laser volleys at it, it will take 140 shots to destroy it. That makes the shields on a Snakeir almost twice as strong as on a star-base. Despite that, there's no special advice here. Just eliminate the Snakeir's escorts, then blast away at the ship's rear until it explodes...just be patient; it may take a while.

Table 2.22 shows the specifications for the Snakeir.

TABLE 2.22: *Snakeir Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Kilrathi Capital Ship
Length	700 meters
Mass	80,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	130 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	5 dps
Maximum Yaw	5 dps
Maximum Roll	5 dps
Ship's Weapons	Turreted Lasers, fighter complement of 20
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 43 cm; Aft Shield: 27 cm; Front: 45 cm; Right: 42 cm; Left: 42 cm; Rear: 22 cm.

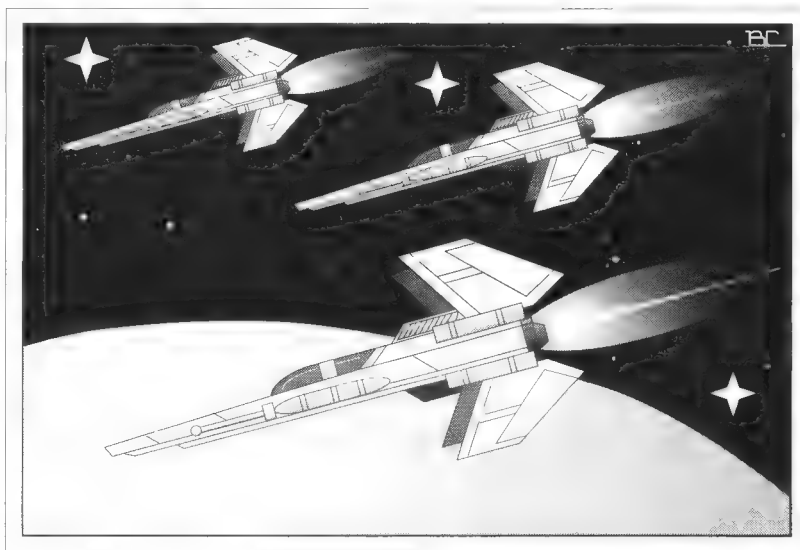
THE SHIPS OF WING COMMANDER II

Wing Commander II is clearly a sequel to Wing Commander I; you'll meet ships that are clear analogs to earlier ships. For example, a ConFed Ferret is clearly the successor to the Hornet, and the Sabre is clearly the "hot ship," the successor to the Rapier. But some things change radically in Wing Commander II. For example, many of the larger, slower ships have now acquired a tail gunner—and a tail gunner with a fairly punishing sting! Tail guns use a kind of neutron beam that can do you some serious damage, removing the old Wing Commander I tactic of hanging on an enemy's tail while chewing it to bits. Furthermore, capital ships cannot be destroyed by simple gunfire; instead, they're destroyed by a special missile called a *torpedo*, which can only be launched in a particular—and difficult—manner. Furthermore, two of the ships you'll fly (the Broadsword and the Crossbow) lack afterburners, making getting out of scrapes difficult. So strap in and let's take a look at the new good guys and bad guys....

FERRET

The Ferret is the patrol ship, the analog of the Hornet. It's quite fast and maneuverable, although not as maneuverable as some ships, such as the Epee. The Ferret's mass drivers make it a bit more formidable than the Hornet, but it's still got lousy shields. To fly this ship and survive, you've got to make good use of the ship's maneuverability and afterburners.

Table 2.23 shows the specifications for the Ferret.



**TABLE 2.23:** *Ferret Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Patrol Fighter
Length	10.2 meters
Mass	10.5 meters
Maximum Velocity	500 kps
Cruise Velocity	360 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1400 kps
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	72 dps
Maximum Yaw	72 dps
Maximum Roll	60 dps
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 6 cm; Aft Shield: 6 cm; Front: 6.5 cm; Right: 4.5 cm; Left: 4.5 cm; Rear: 6.5 cm

BROADSWORD

"Broadsword" is just another way of spelling "Scimitar." In some ways, the Broadsword is worse than the Scimitar—it has no afterburners at all. Furthermore, it has the slowest shield generator in the game; take a pounding, and you'd best run off and hide for ten minutes while the shields regenerate.

When flying the Broadsword, don't wade into a battle unless you must. If attacking a group of fighters, fly about 12,000 km away from them, singling out just one fighter, and then attacking that one. Once the fighters come at you, you obviously can't afterburner away, as you would with other ships. Instead, turn at top speed and run away, but switch to the rear turret and pound the ships that are following you; if you've turned while they're still 8,000 km away or more, then they'll

all follow you in a nice, straight line that's easy to fire along with your rear guns.

Once they've caught up with you, however, it's a different story. You should have your main attackers in the sights of your forward gun, as it's the most powerful—but don't spend so much time turning with this slow-turning bomber that you never get a shot off. If your attackers are just too fast, then jump around the turrets and blast them that way.

Your rear guns are quite devastating, however, so don't overlook them. For example, when attacking the pair of Dorkathi in the Khorah Pahk supply depot mission (Novaya Kiev mission 0), I just circled around the Dorkathi. First I'd come at them with the forward guns until I was just about to ram them, then I'd turn around and give 'em the rear guns for a while. Then I'd turn around and start all over again. Practice jumping from turret to turret, and you'll see a lot more success from a Broadsword. Above all, the thing to remember when flying a Broadsword is that the lack of afterburners, and the relatively slow regeneration of shields, means that you are flying a completely new kind of ship—more of a battleship than a fighter, on a sort of smaller scale. Move into fights slowly, man the turrets, and after each battle, take time to let your shields regenerate.

Table 2.24 shows the specifications for the Broadsword.

TABLE 2.24: *Broadsword Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Bomber
Length	36 meters

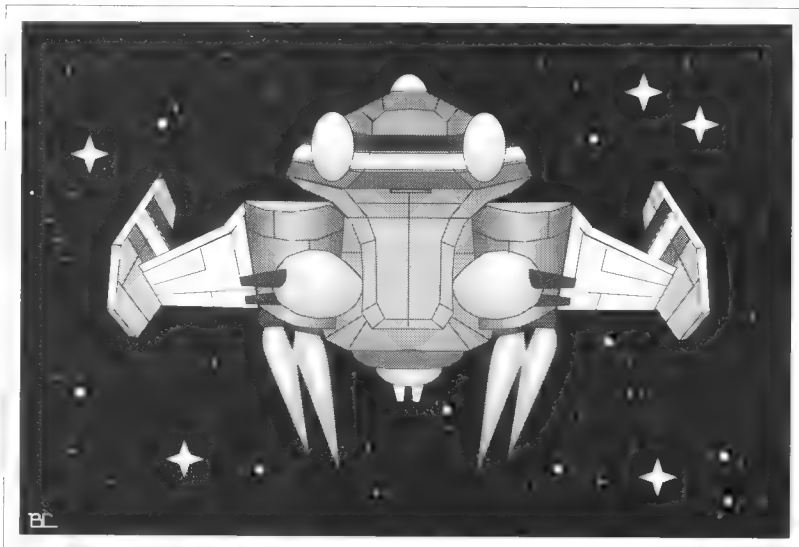


TABLE 2.24: *Broadsword Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Mass	100 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	320 kps (jump capable)
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	51 dps
Maximum Yaw	51 dps
Maximum Roll	51 dps
Ship's Weapons	Torpedoes (4), Pilum FF (Friend-or-Foe) Missiles (3), Mass Driver Cannon (3), Neutron Guns (2 per), Tractor Beam (to rear)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 18 cm; Aft Shield: 18 cm; Front: 15 cm; Right: 13 cm; Left: 13 cm; Rear: 15 cm



CROSSBOW

The copy on the package for Special Operations 1 makes it sound like flying the Crossbow will be endless fun. Actually, it turns out to be a Broadsword painted white. The Crossbow is a bit faster than the Broadsword, but it still lacks afterburners. Additionally, it is actually worse to fly than the Broadsword in that it lacks side turrets and has awful visibility.

(That is, I suppose, a positive feature of the Broadsword that I didn't mention—its good visibility.)

There are some quite difficult Crossbow missions. In particular, the mission where you must chase Prince Thrakhath to a jump point, then fight off a half-dozen Gothris. As with the Broadsword, start running at top speed, then pick off the ships that follow with your rear guns until they catch up to you. By the time they catch you, you may have destroyed a few, evening the odds a bit before getting down to serious dogfighting.

Table 2.25 shows the specifications for the Crossbow.

TABLE 2.25: *Crossbow Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Bomber
Length	24 meters
Mass	40 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	370 kps (jump capable)
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps
Ship's Weapons	Neutron Guns (2), Torpedoes (4), Pilum FF (Friend-or-Foe) Missiles (3), Mass Drivers (3), Turret Guns (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 25 cm; Aft Shield: 25 cm; Front: 20 cm; Right: 25 cm; Left: 25 cm; Rear: 20 cm

SABRE

The Sabre's the Rapier of this game. It's fun and fast—sometimes too fast, as it's easy to run into things—and heavily armed. It can be outfitted either as a heavy fighter or a bomber. Heck, if it had a jump drive, they could get rid of the Broadsword.

Play the Sabre like the Rapier. There're no tricks—just fly well. Use full guns and don't just spray the blasts—place your shots. Use the ITTS tracking system, as it can make destroying enemy targets much easier. Watch your shields and run away if necessary to recharge them, or you'll often find that your rear turret is destroyed. Use the speed and maneuverability of the craft.

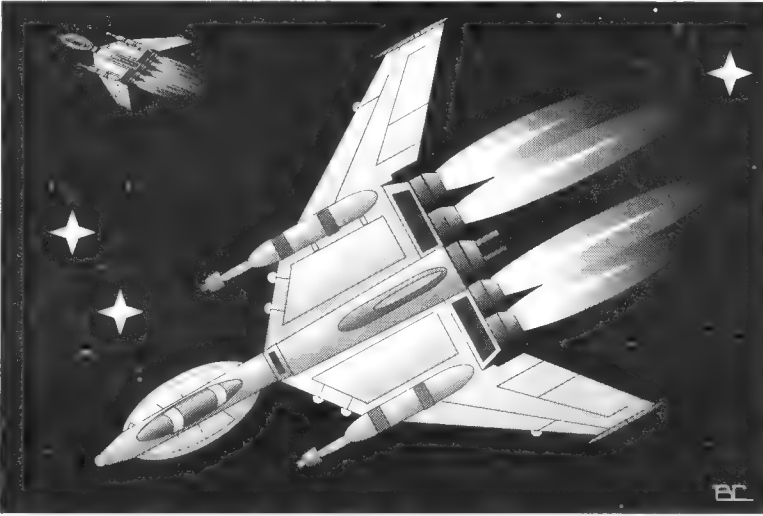


Table 2.26 shows the specifications for the Sabre.

TABLE 2.26: *Sabre Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Attack Fighter
Length	23.6 meters
Mass	22 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	220 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps

TABLE 2.26: *Sabre Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	60 dps
Maximum Yaw	60 dps
Maximum Roll	60 dps
Ship's Weapons	Particle Cannon (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (2), Pilum FF (Friend-or-Foe) Missiles (2), Mass Drivers (2), Chaff Pod, Spiculum IR (Image-Recognition) Missiles (4), Neutron Guns
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 10 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 16 cm; Right: 5 cm; Left: 5 cm; Rear: 16 cm

EPEE

It's not clear what the Epee is intended to do. It's fast—faster than the Ferret—and can turn faster than the Ferret. Additionally, it can carry a pair of torpedoes. Its only real down-side is that it has less shielding than almost any other ship. Other than that, the Epee is probably the right ship to send on patrol and courier missions. It doesn't get sent on those kinds of missions, however, save for once in a while.

The key to living through an Epee mission is to be indirect. Don't fly straight at anything that might be able to shoot at you.

Now, that makes some Epee missions tough, because for some reason Admiral Tolwyn and Angel send out Epees to do escort duty. Escorts are ships that have to be able to take a hit or two and not die. The only way to survive the escort missions are to hit hard and fast, and use the after-burners and the normal high speed of the Epee to allow you to attack ships from their relatively weak sides, rather than head-on (and face their forward guns) or from the rear (and face the tail guns).

The bottom line is that Epees against any other fast ship are very hard to win with. Slower ships are no problem, but fast ships are trouble. If

you've got Wing Commander Academy, try this: Create a mission where you fly an Epee against a Gri-kath. The Gri-kath will immediately launch a missile against you. Run at top speed, afterburners pegged, and the missile will still catch you. The result: You lose shields, armor, and probably a subsystem like the acceleration absorbers, power plant, or shields. In a word, the weak shields of the Epee make it a no-win situation.

Only afterburners will see you through Epee missions. In contrast, however, try a mission of one Epee against five Drakhri. It's a piece of cake, as they're much slower than the Epee.

Table 2.27 shows the specifications for the Epee.

TABLE 2.27: *Epee Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Light Attack Fighter
Length	12.4 meters
Mass	13 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	450 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1360 kps
Acceleration	Excellent

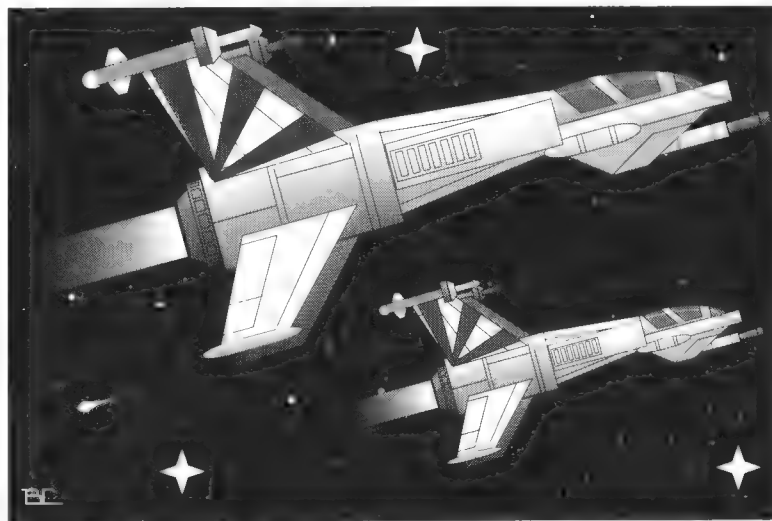


TABLE 2.27: *Epee Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps
Ship's Weapons	Particle Cannons (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (2), Heat-Seeking Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 6 cm; Aft Shield: 6 cm; Front: 3.5 cm; Right: 3 cm; Left: 3 cm; Rear: 3.5 cm

MORNINGSTAR

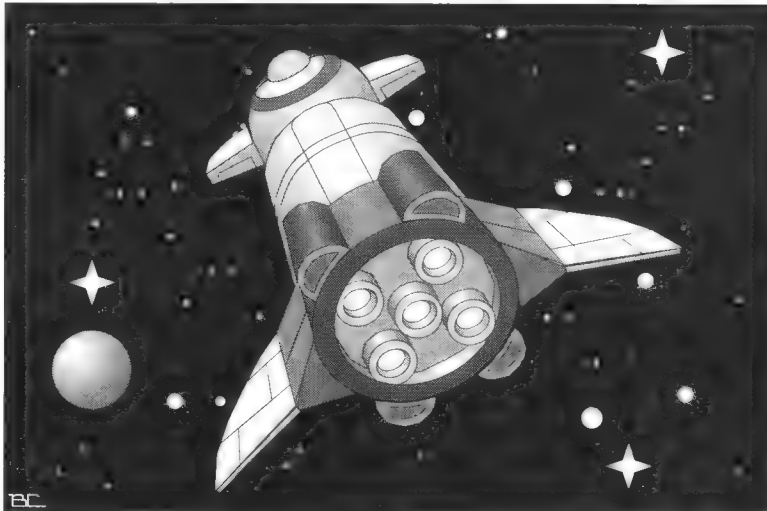
You only fly the Morningstar on a few missions in Special Operations 2, but it's a fun craft. It's fast and can make tight turns, and is heavily armored. Best of all, it's got an unstoppable missile that basically destroys anything. There's no rear turret, but fly it like a Sabre.

Table 2.28 shows the specifications for the Morningstar.



TABLE 2.28: *Morningstar Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Fighter
Length	20 meters
Mass	20 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps (jump capable)
Cruise Velocity	220 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps
Ship's Weapons	Particle Cannon (3), Torpedoes (2), Spiculum IR (Image-Recognition) Missiles (2), Mace Missile
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 15 cm; Aft Shield: 15 cm; Front: 20 cm; Right: 20 cm; Left: 20 cm; Rear: 20 cm



CLYDESDALE

The Clydesdale is the Drayman of Wing Commander II. When defending them, handle them like the Drayman. Be particularly careful when defending a Clydesdale; if you get too close to the ship, you can end up ramming your own ship against the ship that you're supposed to be defending.

Table 2.29 shows the specifications for the Clydesdale.

TABLE 2.29: *Clydesdale Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Military Transport
Length	73.3 meters
Mass	4,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Bad
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannons (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 25 cm; Aft Shield: 25 cm; Front: 12 cm; Right: 11 cm; Left: 11 cm; Rear: 12 cm

WATERLOO

You'll meet a few of these in cinematic sequences in the Wing Commander II games. The Agincourt, the Gettysburg, and the Bastille are three examples. You never have to defend or attack them.

Table 2.30 shows the specifications for the Waterloo.

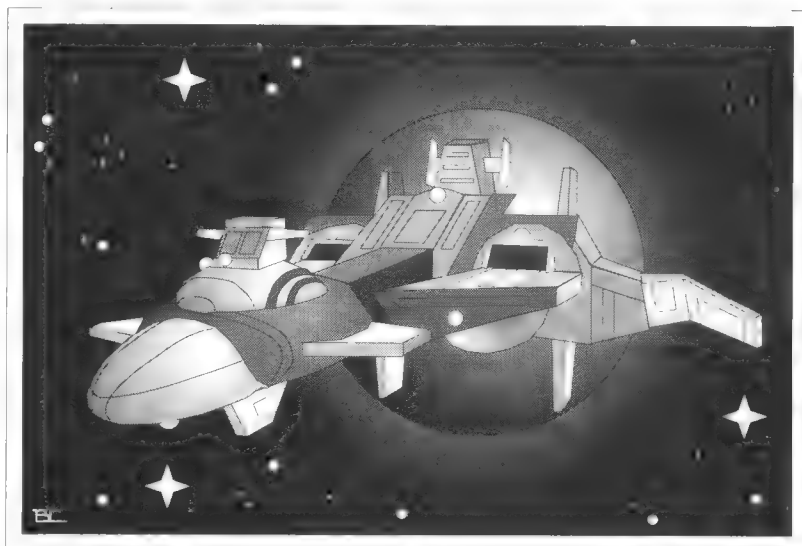
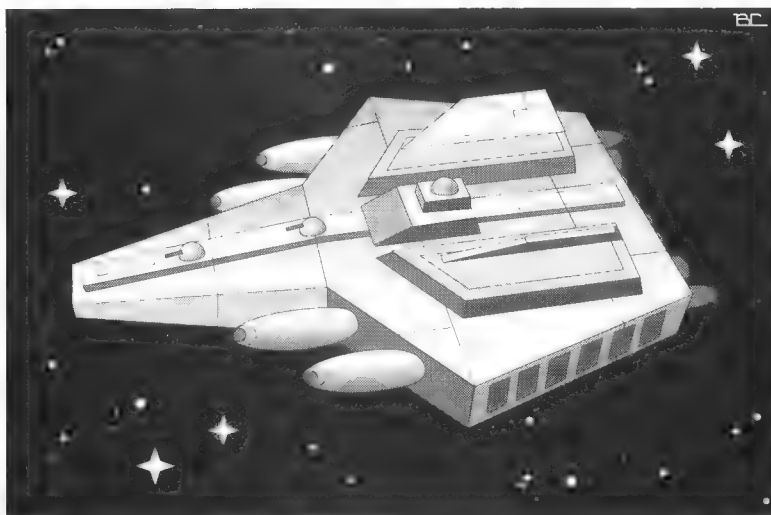


TABLE 2.30: *Waterloo Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Cruiser
Length	503.9 meters
Mass	19,500 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	200 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	5 dps
Maximum Yaw	5 dps
Maximum Roll	5 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannons (3), Anti-Matter Guns (4), light (approx. 50) complement of fighters
Ship's Armor	Phase Shields to Fore and Aft; Front: 300 cm; Right: 250 cm; Left: 250 cm; Rear: 300 cm



GILGAMESH

Gilgamesh-class ships are Confederation destroyers. They're moved into place to attack enemy capital ships; your main connection to them will be to escort them. For example, the William Tell and the Hector are Gilgamesh-class ships.

Treat these like Clydesdales, with one very important difference: These ships have anti-matter cannons that they use to attack enemy capital ships. Anti-matter knows no national allegiances, and so if you manage to get between a Gilgamesh and an enemy ship, you could end up atomized—so stay out of the line of fire.

Table 2.31 shows the specifications for the Gilgamesh.

TABLE 2.31: *Gilgamesh Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Destroyer
Length	312.1 meters
Mass	10,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	250 kps
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannons (2), Anti-Matter Guns (2)
Ship's Armor	Phase Shields to Fore and Aft; Front: 250 cm; Right: 200 cm; Left: 200 cm; Rear: 250 cm

FREE TRADER

Paladin, who is now a spy, flies the spacelanes in the *Bonnie Heather*, a free trader ship, looking for information. It has a hangar deck, and so

can accommodate a small complement of fighters. The ship is jump-drive capable, and basically invulnerable; you can just fly around and watch Grikaths attack the *Heather* for hours, and nothing happens.

Table 2.32 shows the specifications for the Free Trader.

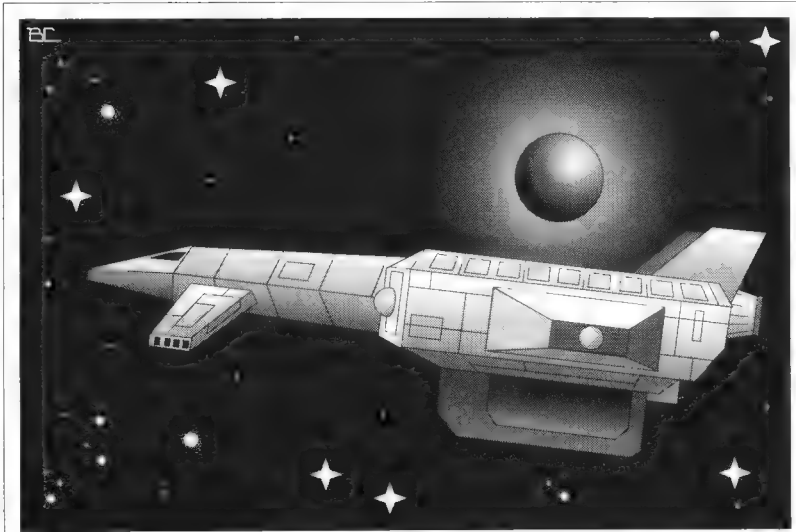


TABLE 2.32: *Free Trader Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Free Trader
Length	83 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor

TABLE 2.32: *Free Trader Specifications (continued)*

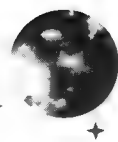
SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannon
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 10 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 9 cm; Right: 7 cm; Left: 7 cm; Rear: 9 cm

CONCORDIA

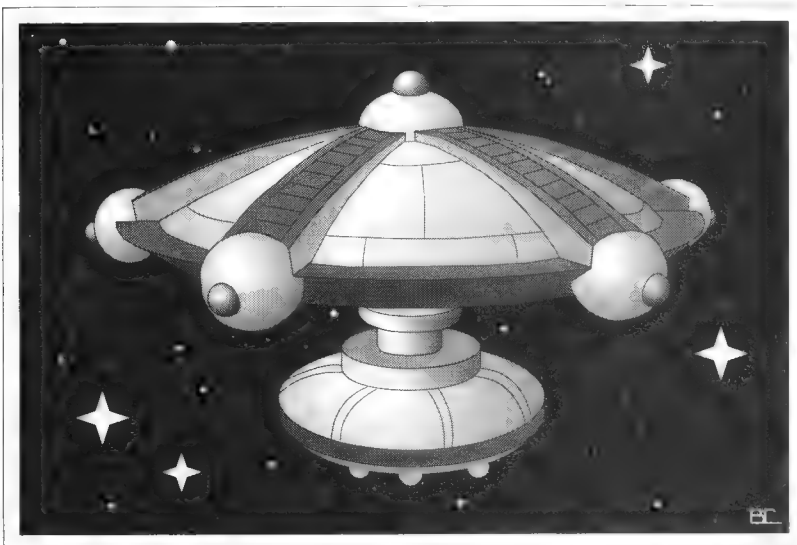
The *Concordia* is the Wing Commander II analog to the *Tiger's Claw*. It's a bit longer than the *Claw*, and a bit slower, but it's got an arsenal that puts the other carrier to shame. Like the *Claw*, the *Concordia* is very difficult to destroy, so don't panic too much when called upon to defend it from attack. Like any other ship, it can be killed, but it's not an easy task.

Table 2.33 shows the specifications for the *Concordia*.



**TABLE 2.33:** *Concordia Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Concordia
Length	983.7 meters
Mass	73,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	100 kps
Cruise Velocity	50 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Bad
Maximum Pitch	5 dps
Maximum Yaw	5 dps
Maximum Roll	5 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannon (3), Anti-Matter Guns (8), Phase-Trasit Cannon, full (approx. 100) complement of fighters
Ship's Armor	Phase Shields to Fore and Aft; Front: 500 cm; Right: 400 cm; Left: 400 cm; Rear: 500 cm



CONFEDERATE STARBASE

Confederate space stations show up periodically in Wing Commander II. You actually begin the game working in the comm room on Caernavaron Station, and in later missions you'll be called upon periodically to defend Olympus Station.

Table 2.34 shows the specifications for the Confederate.

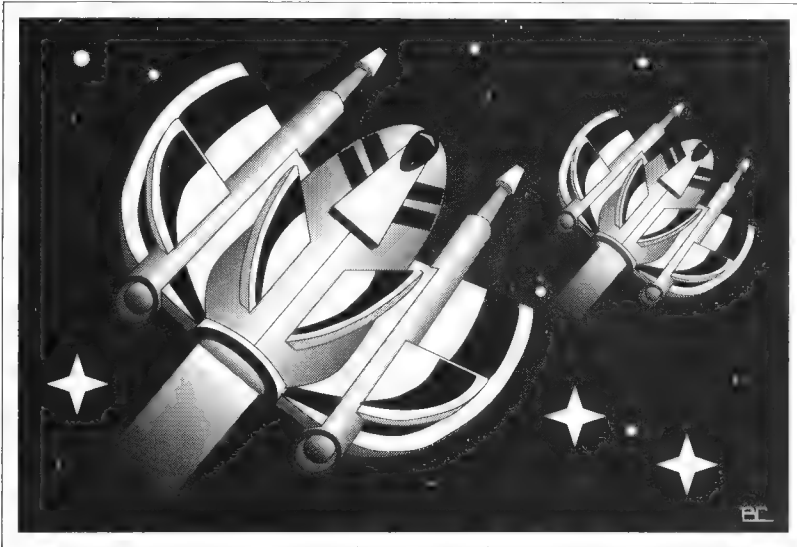
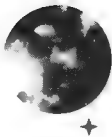
TABLE 2.34: *Confederate Starbase Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Space Station
Radius	1,200 meters
Mass	230,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	10 kps
Cruise Velocity	10 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	NA
Maximum Yaw	NA
Maximum Roll	NA
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannon (4) and full complement of fighters (approx. 100)
Ship's Armor	Phase Shields to Fore and Aft; Front: 700 cm; Right: 700 cm; Left: 700 cm; Rear: 700 cm

SARTHAS

Sarthas are obviously the analog of Salthis...or are they? Salthis are fast and maneuverable, as are Sarthas. But Sarthas have an important difference from Salthis—armament.

Salthis had basically harmless lasers. But Sarthas have neutron guns, and apparently they've got enough of a power plant to run them continuously. That makes for a very dangerous combination. Novaya Kiev 3, the mission where you fly a Broadsword to retrieve a data capsule, is a case in point. You jump into an area and are immediately assailed by Sarthas. If you can destroy them all, then you're doing very well.



If you have superior armament, like the triple mass drivers of the Broadsword or the dual gun types of the Sabre, then just slam Sarthas with energy until you destroy them. With Epees or Ferrets, use the afterburner slide (see Chapter 4) to attack and eliminate Sarthas. Be sure to lock a single target, then concentrate on that target; don't just flail away at all your attackers, or you won't have a chance.

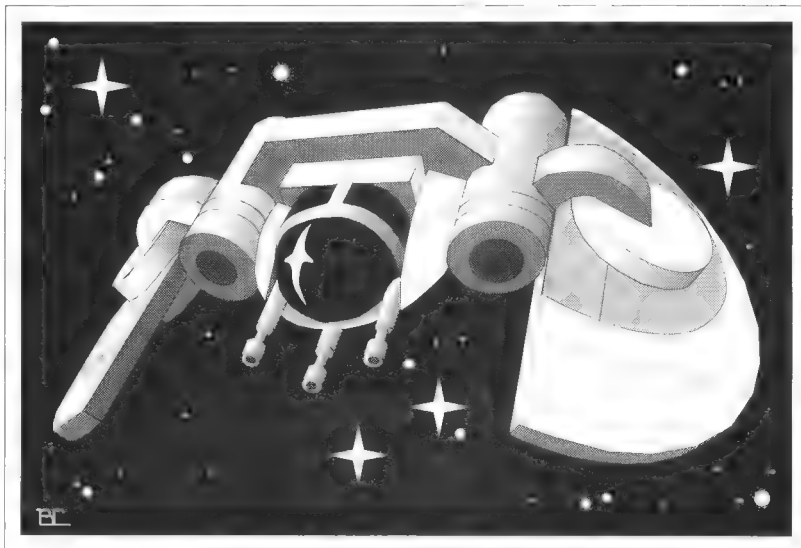
Table 2.35 shows the specifications for the Sartha.

TABLE 2.35: *Sartha Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Light Fighter
Length	8.3 meters
Mass	12.5 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	220 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	30 dps
Maximum Yaw	30 dps
Maximum Roll	30 dps
Ship's Weapons	Neutron Guns (2), Dumb-Fire Missile
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 5 cm; Aft Shield: 5 cm; Front: 4 cm; Right: 3 cm; Left: 3 cm; Rear: 4 cm

The Drakhri are the Dralthis of Wing Commander II. They're not that fast, and they don't turn very well. They're equipped only with triple laser guns.

Table 2.36 shows the specifications for the Drakhri.



Class	Medium Fighter
Length	11.7 meters
Mass	14 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	56 dps

Class	Medium Fighter
Length	11.7 meters
Mass	14 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Good
Maximum Pitch	56 dps

TABLE 2.36: *Drakhri Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Yaw	56 dps
Maximum Roll	56 dps
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannons (3), Chaff Pod, Dumb-Fire Missiles (4)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 5.5 cm; Aft Shield: 5.5 cm; Front: 4 cm; Right: 3.5 cm; Left: 3.5 cm; Rear: 4 cm

JALKEHI

A close analog to the Jalthis—slow, clumsy, with big firepower and missiles. One thing that makes Jalkehi nastier than Jalthis is the Jalkehi's

rear turret. Don't follow this ship, as its rear guns can chew you up in no time at all. Use the afterburner slide or a similar tactic.

Table 2.37 shows the specifications for the Jalkehi.

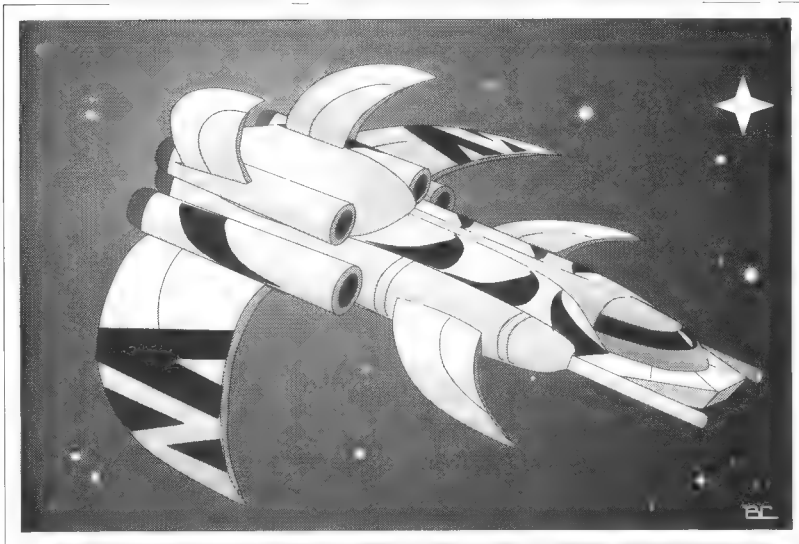


TABLE 2.37: *Jalkehi Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Fighter
Length	25.2 meters
Mass	20 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	360 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1080 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	60 dps
Maximum Yaw	60 dps
Maximum Roll	60 dps
Ship's Weapons	Particle Cannon, Dumb-Fire Missile, Neutron Gun, Image-Recognition Missiles (4), Laser Cannon (4)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 15 cm; Aft Shield: 15 cm; Front: 13 cm; Right: 11 cm; Left: 11 cm; Rear: 13 cm

GRIKATH

The name makes it sound like the Grikath is the analog of the Gratha, but it isn't. The Grikath is a tough, fast, maneuverable fighter, and probably the second-worst ship to go up against in the Wing Commander II universe. (The Gothri is the worst.) The Grikath carries shipkiller torpedoes, and apparently has a better targeting mechanism than do the ConFed ships—it takes at least a few minutes to lock on a torpedo from the ConFed ships, but the Grikath seems to be able to launch the little suckers in no time flat. And that's not even the worst of it: Not only is this ship fast and agile, it's got a rear turret. Treat Grikaths with respect.



Tactical hints for a Grikath: As there is a rear turret, of course side attacks are best. Another approach is to get about 5,000 clicks in front of a Grikath, then turn quickly to face it, and fire head-on until you see the Grikath's fire returning—then swerve out of the way of the incoming gunfire. Believe it or not, another way to kill Grikaths is to lure them into asteroid fields. Their pilots seem so kill-crazy that they'll fly like demons to chase you, oblivious to the rocks. Fly well, and you'll be rewarded with

a "Hraagh!" on your intercom. The only down-side to using asteroids to kill opponents is that the kills don't go on your record.

Table 2.38 shows the specifications for the Grikath.

TABLE 2.38: *Grikath Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Heavy Fighter
Length	17.7 meters
Mass	27 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	330 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	990 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Bad
Maximum Pitch	90 dps

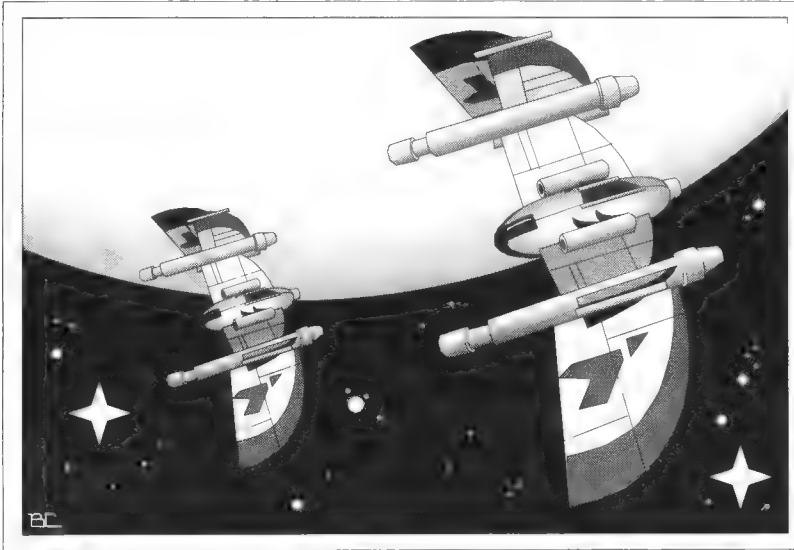


TABLE 2.38: *Grikath Specifications (continued)*

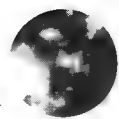
SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps
Ship's Weapons	Torpedoes (3), Chaff Pods (3), Neutron Guns (3, + 2 more in the turret), Friend-or-Foe Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 17 cm; Aft Shield: 17 cm; Front: 16 cm; Right: 14 cm; Left: 14 cm; Rear: 16 cm

STRAKHA

The Strakha are the Kilrathi “stealth” fighters. They can disappear from your viewscreen using a cloaking device that, fortunately, uses a lot of energy, and so makes it impossible for them to cloak continuously. They must de-cloak to fire and launch missiles, as well.

While invisible fighters sound pretty tough, they're not. The Strakha have shields of roughly the strength of tissue paper. Furthermore, they're armed only with lasers. They are actually quite fast, however, so if one tries a kamikaze ramming attack on your ship, you'll have to move fast or die.

If you target a Strakha, your targeting computer can actually maintain a fix on them. That, combined with their weak shields and weak weapons, suggests the following strategy. When confronted with a wing of Strakha, slow down. Target the lead ship and lock your targeting computer on it. The Strakha will fly in a straight line at you, so all you need to do is to just point your ship's nose at the Strakha, and continuously fire. The Strakha will probably try to cloak when you're about to finish it off, but that's okay—your targeting computer will maintain the fix on the Strakha long enough for you to destroy it. Then speed up and put some distance between yourself and the pack; that'll keep them from becoming scared and cloaking. Let them come at you uncloaked, and polish off the lead ship in the same way that you zapped the first one. From



that point on, they'll scatter. Just watch your long-range scanner for a red dot to appear—that's a Strakha. Turn and face it, locking it on your targeting computer immediately. Then let it bore right in; fire continuously, and it's history.

The only other thing to keep in mind is that you want to eliminate each Strakha in one pass; if you wound a Strakha, it'll just cloak and run away, robbing you of a chance to finish it off. That means that you should always have a fully charged gun capacitor before attacking a Strakha. Run away and recharge a bit if

you must, but always make sure that your "chamber" is full before taking on Strakhas.

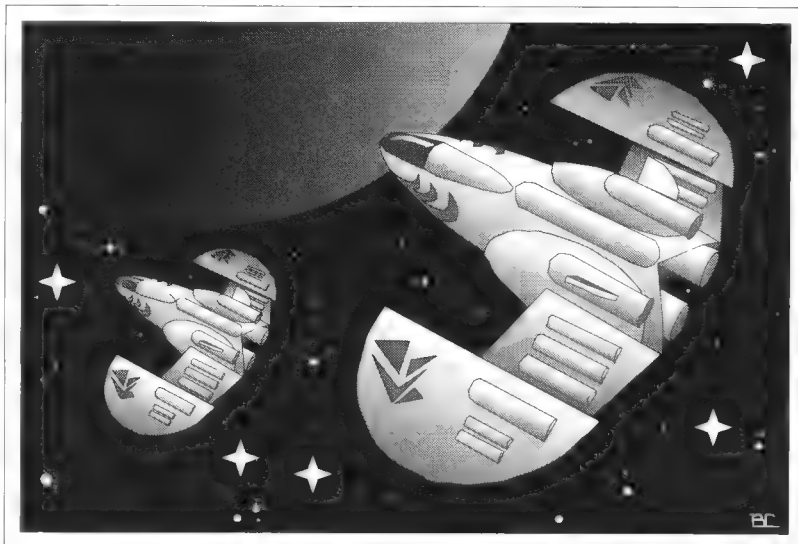
Table 2.39 shows the specifications for the Strakha.

TABLE 2.39: *Strakha Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	17 meters
Mass	15 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	320 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps
Afterburner Velocity	960 kps (est.)
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	90 dps

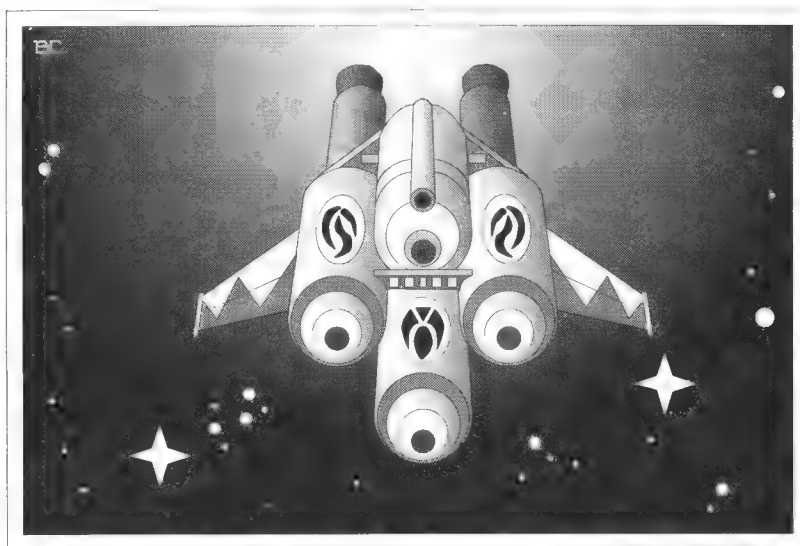
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps
Ship's Weapons	Laser Cannons (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (2), Torpedoes (2), Stealth Device
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 4 cm; Aft Shield: 4 cm; Front: 4 cm; Right: 3.5 cm; Left: 3.5 cm; Rear: 4 cm

Table 2.40 shows the specifications for the Gothri.



**TABLE 2.40:** *Gothri Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	12 meters
Mass	14 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	450 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps
Acceleration	Very Good
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Particle Cannon (2), FF Missile, DF Missile, IR Missiles (3), Turreted Laser, Turreted Meson Blaster
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 17.5 cm; Aft Shield: 17.5 cm; Front: 15 cm; Right: 15 cm; Left: 15 cm; Rear: 15 cm.



DORKATHI

A latter-day Dorkir. Treat it the same as a Dorkir, but keep your eye on your shields—the flack guns that the capital ships of Wing Commander II have are more dangerous than the ones in Wing Commander I. The rear is, as always, the most lightly-protected part of a Dorkathi. These ships

do not have phase shields, and can be destroyed with conventional guns.

Table 2.41 shows the specifications for the Dorkathi.

TABLE 2.41: *Dorkathi Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Military Transport
Length	95 meters
Mass	5,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	200 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	5 dps
Maximum Yaw	5 dps
Maximum Roll	5 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannons (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 19 cm; Aft Shield: 19 cm; Front: 17 cm; Right: 16 cm; Left: 16 cm; Rear: 17 cm

KAMEKH

Joan's Fighting Spacecraft claims that the Kamekh has phase shields, and can only be destroyed with a torpedo. It's not true; Kamekhs can be killed with lasers, if you fire long enough.

Capital ships can send a scare through pilots because they're so darn big. But the fact is, capital ships can be a piece of cake to eliminate, largely because of their size—they can't maneuver well.

Kamekhs have missiles, which they'll fire sometimes; but the biggest weapon that Kamekhs have are their flak guns. Flak guns have a psychological effect in addition to their shield-attenuating effect, in that they are really scary. Each flak gun hit is negligible in terms of its effects on



your shield, but space goes red and flashes—the same red flashes that a pilot has learned to associate with hits from more powerful guns. Put it this way: If a Sartha's on your tail, and it's pounding you with its neutron guns, then when the outer space in the viewscreen goes from black to flashing red, you're going to be hearing funeral music soon. You'll have to react fast, or die.

Flak guns, on the other hand, are a lot of sound and fury, but they're not that deadly. You've just got to learn to ignore the natural "let's get outta here!" reaction that all that red flashing space generates in your gut, keep an eye on the shields, and just blast right in and do your job. Treat a Kamekh like any capital ship

from Wing Commander I—just park on its tail and blaze away at it until it's dead. If your shields get too low, then afterburner away, recharge the shields, and then go finish the job.

Kamekhs usually have a fighter escort. Destroy the escort before taking on the Kamekh.

Table 2.42 shows the specifications for the Kamekh.

TABLE 2.42: *Kamekh Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Corvette
Length	135 meters
Mass	1,300 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	200 kps

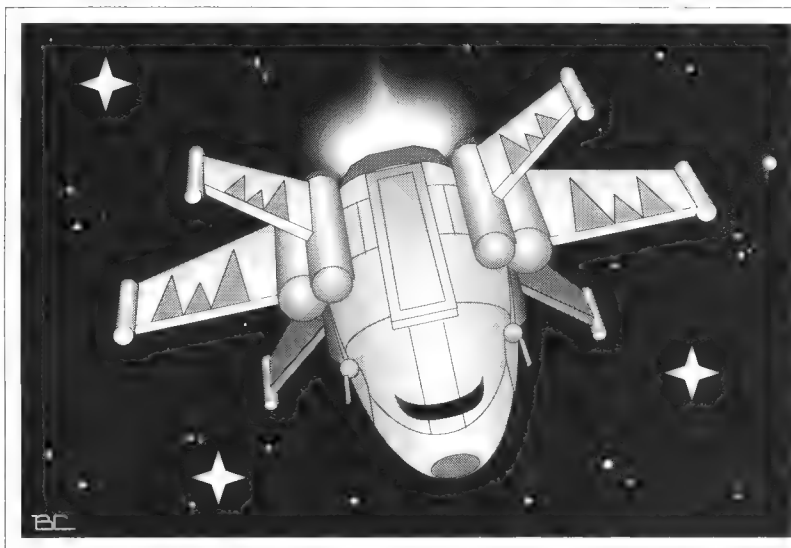


TABLE 2.42: *Kamekh Specifications (continued)*

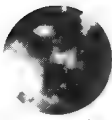
SPECIFICATIONS	
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	20 dps
Maximum Yaw	20 dps
Maximum Roll	20 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannons (3), Image-Recognition Missiles (6), Torpedoes (4)
Ship's Armor	Fore and Aft Shield: Phase Shields; Front: 300 cm; Right: 280 cm; Left: 280 cm; Rear: 300 cm

RALATHA

The Ralatha is an obvious analog to the Ralari, with the addition that it's got the more deadly Wing Commander II flak guns, and phase shields.

Since it has phase shields, you can destroy a Ralatha only with a torpedo or two, requiring the tedious torpedo-lock process (see Chapter 4 for more on this). As you can't lock torpedoes if you move around a lot, the Ralatha can be a pain in the neck because it can move fairly quickly for a capital ship. If the Ralatha manages to move quickly enough





to break the torpedo lock, there's nothing to do but to do another torpedo pass.

When attacking a Ralatha, eliminate its fighter escort, then torpedo it. A Mace missile will also destroy a Ralatha.

Table 2.43 shows the specifications for the Ralatha.

TABLE 2.43: *Ralatha Specifications*

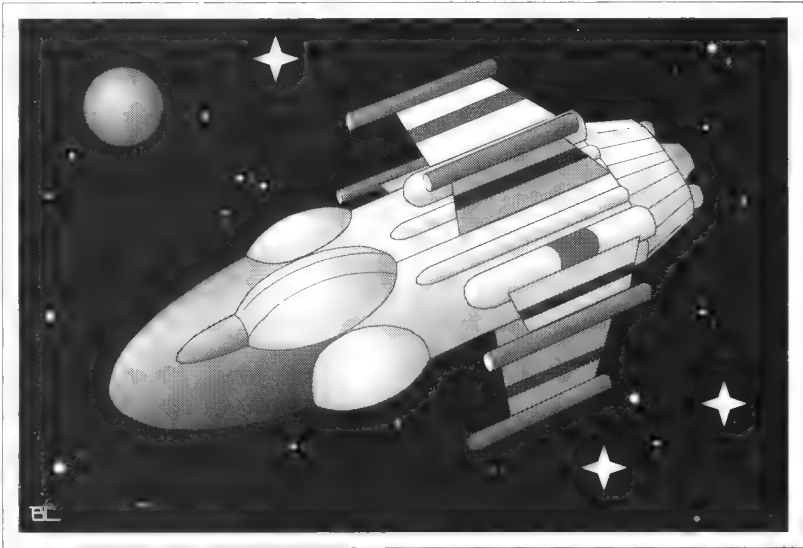
SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Destroyer
Length	394.2 meters
Mass	11,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	250 kps
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	5 dps
Maximum Yaw	5 dps
Maximum Roll	5 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannons (2), Anti-Matter Cannons (2), light (approx. 50) complement of fighters
Ship's Armor	Fore and Aft Shield: Phase Shields; Front: 500 cm; Right: 500 cm; Left: 500 cm; Rear: 500 cm

FRALTHRA

In Wing Commander I, the difference between a Fralthi and a Ralari was basically armor; the Fralthi had a tougher skin. With Wing Commander II, that difference has been reduced by the phase shields. Some ships with phase shields require two torpedoes to destroy them, and some require just one, but other than that, there's no real difference

between all ships with phase shields from a pilot’s point of view. Both the Ralatha and the Fralthra require two torpedoes in order to destroy them.

The Ralatha has the advantage of speed, but the Fralthra has one very distinct advantage—antimatter guns. (*Joan’s* claims that the Ralatha has antimatter guns, but I’ve never been fired upon by a Ralatha with anti-matter guns. I have been fired upon by Frathras with antimatter guns.) If you’re ever targeting a Fralthra, and see a pair of light-blue balls come sailing out from the Fralthra towards you, break off the attack and get out of their way! Those are antimatter blasts. Antimatter blasts can bypass a ship’s shields, leaving only armor for protection. Once the armor’s gone, one blast from an anti-matter gun can destroy your ship, even with your shields charged to maximum.



When attacking a Fralthra, be patient. Your first torpedo run may not be successful; if so, don’t worry about it. Just break off and try again.

Table 2.44 shows the specifications for the Fralthra.

TABLE 2.44: *Fralthra Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Cruiser
Length	612 meters
Mass	20,500 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps

TABLE 2.44: *Fraltha Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	5 dps
Maximum Yaw	5 dps
Maximum Roll	5 dps
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannon (3), Anti-Matter Guns (3), light (approx.50) complement of fighters
Ship's Armor	Fore and Aft Shield: Phase Shields; Front: 700 cm; Right: 600 cm; Left: 600 cm; Rear: 700 cm

BASES

Several missions require that you destroy a fixed object, like a fuel depot or supply base. They have phase shields, so just treat them like a big

capital ship. Bases aren't all that dangerous, as they do not have antimatter guns—all they've got are flak guns.

Table 2.45 shows the specifications for the Supply Depot.

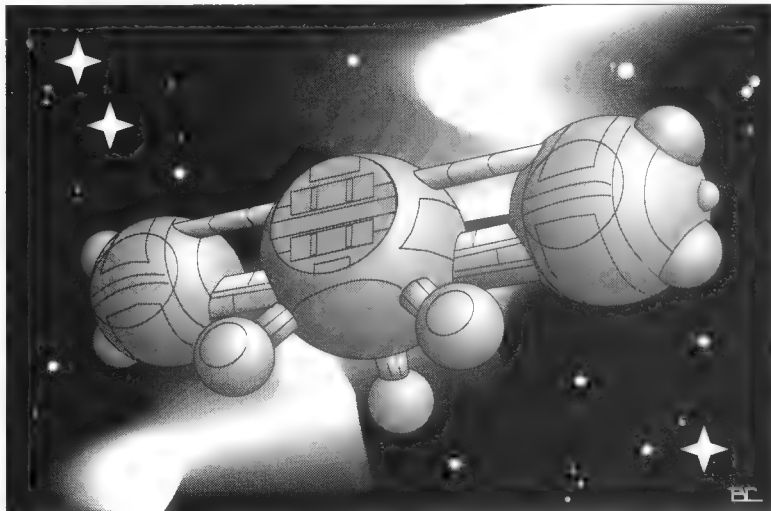


TABLE 2.45: *Supply Depot Specifications*

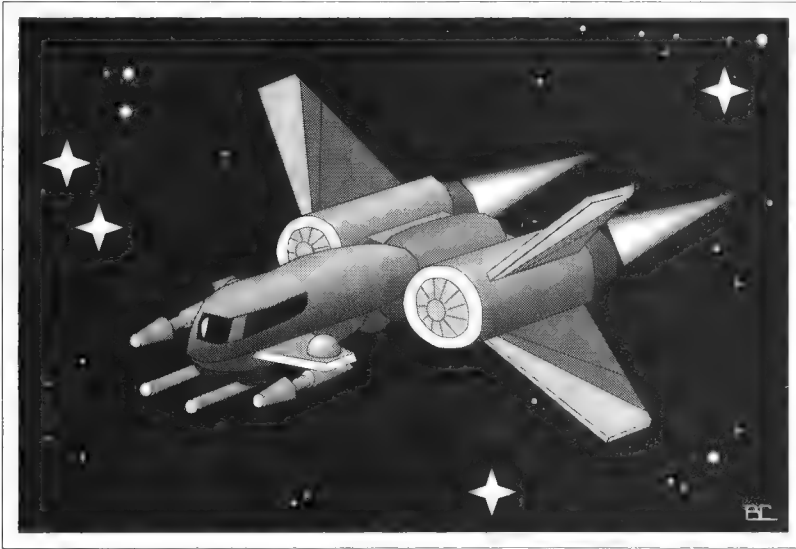
SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Space Station
Length	806.3 meters
Mass	40,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	NA
Cruise Velocity	NA
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	NA
Maximum Pitch	NA
Maximum Yaw	NA
Maximum Roll	NA
Ship's Weapons	Flak Cannon (2), light (approx. 50) complement of fighters
Ship's Armor	Fore and Aft Shield: Phase Shields; Front: 400 cm; Right: 300 cm; Left: 300 cm; Rear: 400 cm

WING COMMANDER ACADEMY SHIPS

Wing Commander Academy basically just uses the ships of Wing Commander II, but it includes two new ships, both of which you can fly. They are intended to be “super” ships, powerful new arrows in the quivers of the Confederation and the Empire.

WRAITH

The Wraith is very fast and maneuverable. It's also equipped with a new kind of missile called a Leech missile, and guns called Reaper guns. The Reapers are fairly powerful, with a range of up to 5,000 km. The Leech drains the shields away from a ship for a brief period of time,



making it possible to easily destroy the ship.

The Wraith really has only one apparent flaw. Its shields recharge fairly slowly, so be careful and watch your shield level when dogfighting. It also seems quite easy on the afterburner fuel—it's nearly impossible to run out of afterburner fuel, even when the 'burners are kept on for minutes at a time.

The Wraith is a nice ship, but it's probably too powerful. I can easily get to gauntlet level 10 in Academy using a Wraith.

Table 2.46 shows the specifications for the Wraith.

TABLE 2.46: *Wraith Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	16 meters
Mass	13.5 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	600 kps
Cruise Velocity	400 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1600 kps
Acceleration	Excellent (much superior to all other ships)
Maximum Pitch	120 dps
Maximum Yaw	120 dps
Maximum Roll	120 dps

TABLE 2.46: *Wraith Specifications (continued)***SPECIFICATIONS**

Ship's Weapons	Reaper Cannon (2), Particle Cannon (2), Leech Missiles (2), Javelin Heat-Seeking Missiles (2), Chaff Pods (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 20 cm; Aft Shield: 20 cm; Front: 10 cm; Right: 10 cm; Left: 10 cm; Rear: 10 cm

JRATHEK

The Jrathek is supposed to be the latest in Kilrathi technology, a truly formidable ship. In actuality, it's quite fast, nimble, and well armored. Additionally, its new plasma-bolt gun and photon cannon creates some real damage if it hits you.

It's not the scariest cat ship by any means, however. It's no slouch—it's a bit worrisome to be running flat-out on afterburners in a Sabre, only to find the Jratheks are gaining on you—but it's really just a tougher Sartha. It's just not in the league of the Grikath and the Gothri.

Why? Simple: no rear turret. Any moderately fast ship can chase the Jrathek's tail, taking pot shots at it until it's destroyed. If the Jrathek turns, just avoid its shots, and get back on its tail.

If you're flying a Jrathek, then you'll really like the fact that the shields regenerate very quickly, as do the gun capacitors. Use both the photon and the plasma guns, keep





the speed set to the maximum (500 kps), and use the ship’s maneuverability to stay out of trouble.

Table 2.47 shows the specifications for the Jrathek.

TABLE 2.47: *Jrathek Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	20 meters
Mass	15 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	500 kps
Cruise Velocity	350 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1400 kps
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	120 kps
Maximum Yaw	120 kps
Maximum Roll	120 kps
Ship’s Weapons	Photon Cannon, Plasma Bolts (2), Friend-or-Foe Missiles (2), Chaff Pod, Dumb-Fire Missiles (2)
Ship’s Armor	Fore Shield: 15 cm; Aft Shield: 15 cm; Front: 20 cm; Right: 18 cm; Left: 18 cm; Rear: 20 cm

THE SHIPS OF PRIVATEER

Privateer offers a look at a number of new ships. What you’ll find, however, is that many of them are just old familiar Wing Commander II ships dressed up a bit.

The ships that you’ll pilot in Privateer are a bit less powerful than the ConFed ships that you’re used to from Wing Commander I and II. The theme of Privateer seems to be “do more with less.”

Privateer ships are very uniform. Even though they look different, and may have different turning and speed characteristics, they all fly very much the same, due no doubt to the way that Origin developed the game.

TARSUS

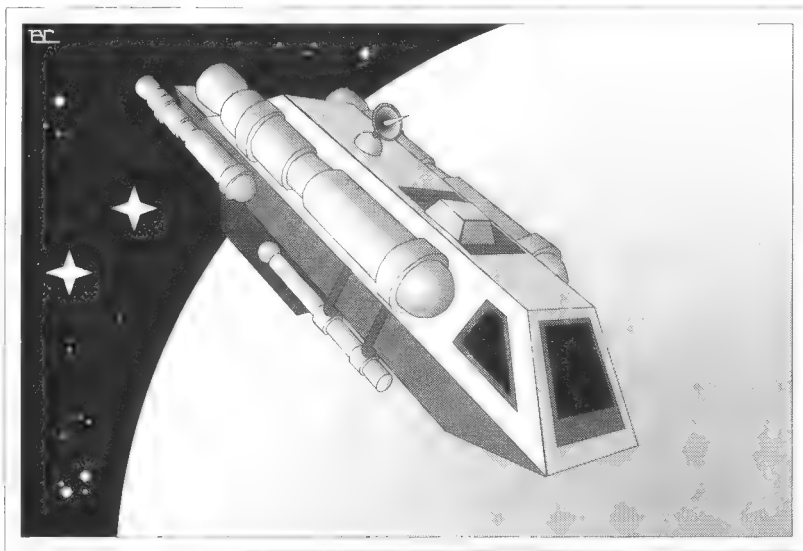
You start out in Privateer with a Tarsus. All the documentation seems to indicate that this is a hopelessly useless ship, a ship that you'd do well to dump for an Orion just as soon as you can.

That's not really true.

The central thing to understand in buying ships in Privateer is, don't buy a ship until you can completely outfit it. You are far better off with a Tarsus that's loaded for bear than you are with a half-equipped Centurion. (Centurions with level-1 engines and shields are known among us hunter/mercenary types as "target drones.")

The Tarsus's main weakness is that it can't go very fast, even on afterburners. There's a lot of discussion in Chapter 14 about buying ships, but the main things to keep in mind with a Tarsus (or any other Privateer ship) are 1) buy two missile racks and keep them full, and 2) don't buy the highest level of shield available. If you buy a shield of the same level as your engine, then the shield will tap all of the engine's power, decreasing afterburner capacity. The best shields are the afterburners!

Table 2.48 shows the specifications for the Tarsus.



**TABLE 2.48:** *Tarsus Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Merchant Scout
Length	83 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	300 kps
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	600 kps
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	40 dps
Maximum Yaw	40 dps
Maximum Roll	40 dps
Cargo Hold	100 units (150 with cargo expansion)
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (3)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 10 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 8 cm; Right: 8 cm; Left: 8 cm; Rear: 8 cm.

ORION

The Orion would be a nearly perfect ship if you could fit two missile racks on it. Two missile racks are really ideal because they allow you to fight two ships at the same time. Here's how: First, make sure you've got a bunch of image-recognition missiles (IR) missiles—heat seekers and friend-or-foe missiles will not work for this! Then lock your targeting computer onto one ship, and launch a missile (if you've only got one missile tube) or two (if you've got two tubes), and immediately turn away from the ship—keeping the targeting computer locked—and fire upon a ship that's 180 degrees away from the locked ship.

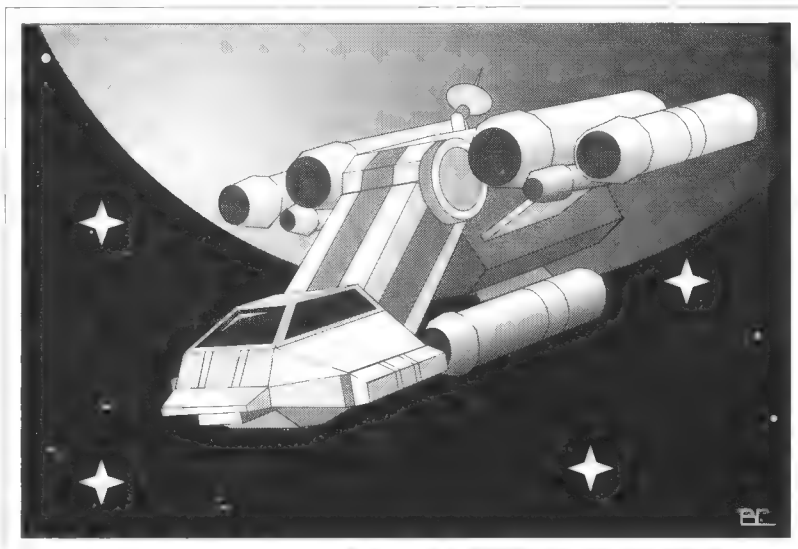
The idea is that you can keep launching missiles, which zip around behind you and attack the (locked) ship that you can't see, and you can simultaneously fire upon a ship right in front of you. You want the locked ship behind you so that your gun shots don't destroy your missile. It's a very effective method for taking on two attackers simultaneously. This can be done with an Orion, but not as effectively as with a ship that's got two missile racks.

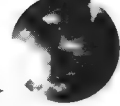
Other than that, the Orion's a great ship in that it supports five levels of engine and shield upgrades. Set up an Orion with level-five engines, level-three shields, and dual tachyon guns, and you can fire continuous tachyon bursts while on the afterburners. That's a great configuration for chasing Talons, as you can whiz around, staying on an enemy's tail and also moving quickly enough that you make it tough for his buddies to target you.

Table 2.49 shows the specifications for the Orion.

TABLE 2.49: *Orion Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Mercenary Gunship
Length	78 meters
Mass	1,950 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	350 kps
Cruise Velocity	200 kps



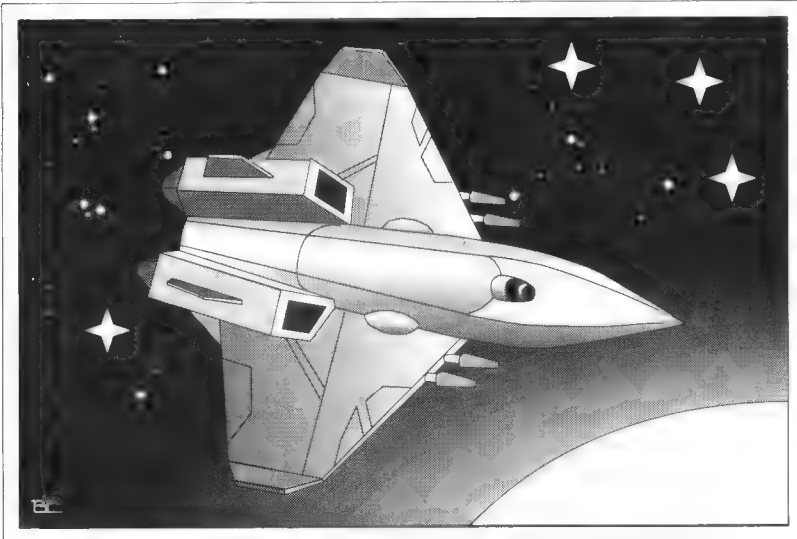
**TABLE 2.49:** *Orion Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Afterburner Velocity	800 kps
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	45 dps
Maximum Yaw	45 dps
Maximum Roll	45 dps
Cargo Hold	50 units (75 with cargo expansion)
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Heat-Seeking Missiles (3), Turreted Lasers (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 48 cm; Aft Shield: 50 cm; Front: 35 cm; Right: 35 cm; Left: 35 cm; Rear: 35 cm.

CENTURION

The Centurion is the ship with which you'll do the latter part of Privateer—the story line. It's faster, can accommodate four guns, and you can mount two missile racks on it.

Recommended configuration for a Centurion is level-3 engines (the maximum, unfortunately), level-2 shields, four tachyon guns, and dual missile racks filled with IR missiles. If you think that you're a good enough pilot that you can evade incoming fire, then stay with a level-1 shield so that there's



plenty of power for your guns and afterburners. More on flying a Centurion in Chapter 14.

Table 2.50 shows the specifications for the Centurion.

TABLE 2.50: *Centurion Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Bounty Hunter Heavy Fighter
Length	75 meters
Mass	1,900 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	500 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1000 kps
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	72 dps
Maximum Yaw	72 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps
Cargo Hold	50 units (75 with cargo expansion)
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Particle Cannon, Tachyon Cannon, Friend-or-Foe Missiles (2), Image-Recognition Missiles (2), Tractor Beam, Turreted Mass Drivers (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 20 cm; Aft Shield: 15 cm; Front: 15 cm; Right: 15 cm; Left: 15 cm; Rear: 15 cm.

GALAXY

The Galaxy turns like a Tarsus, supports only a level 3 shield and engine, supports only two guns, and only one missile rack. Additionally, it isn't even as fast as an Orion.

Having said all that, what's a Galaxy good for? Well, if you've completed Privateer in a Centurion and want a real challenge, then you can go back and do it again in a Galaxy.

Table 2.51 shows the specifications for the Galaxy.

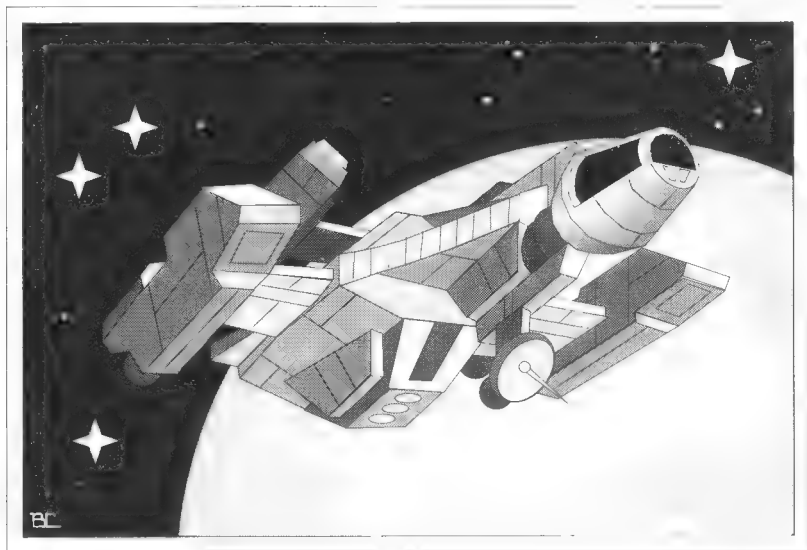


TABLE 2.51: *Galaxy Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Merchant Ship
Length	85 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	300 kps
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	700 kps
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	45 dps
Maximum Yaw	45 dps
Maximum Roll	45 dps
Cargo Hold	150 units (200 with cargo expansion)

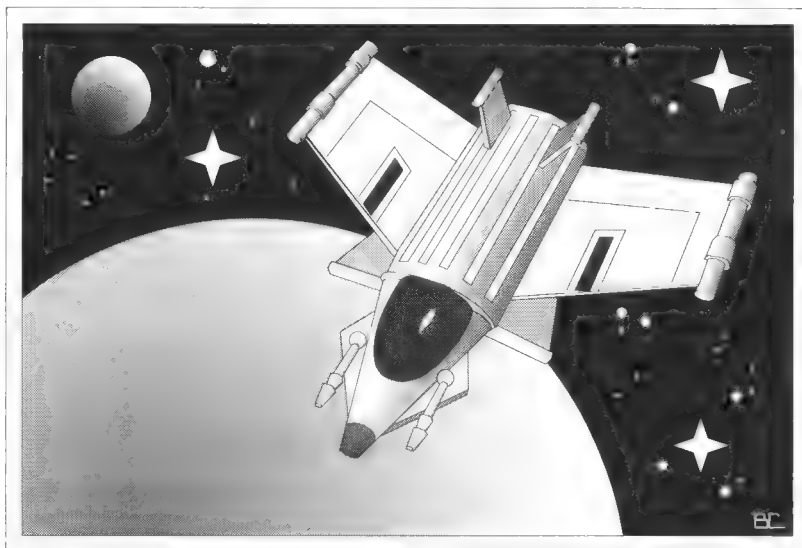
TABLE 2.51: *Galaxy Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Dumb-Fire Missiles (3), Heat-Seeking Missiles (4), Turreted Mass Drivers (4)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 25cm; Aft Shield: 20 cm; Front: 17.5 cm; Right: 17.5 cm; Left: 17.5 cm; Rear: 17.5 cm.

TALON

You'll fight a lot of Talons in Privateer. Retros and pirates all seem to have a source of cheap, plentiful Talons. They're nothing to sneeze at, however—their dual mass drivers and moderately good speed can make taking three of them on at the same time a quite scary proposition.

You fight a Talon differently in different ships. In a slower ship, use two missile tubes if possible. Talons make an initial approach at you by flying straight in towards you; for that reason, you can sometimes pick off one or two ships on the initial approach by firing torpedoes at them. Torpedoes are dumb-fire missiles, without any kind of guidance system, but they're devastating—one hit can often destroy a Talon. Additionally, you can fire torpedoes in rapid fire, so line up the Talon and launch two torpedoes, then turn and face the next incoming ship.





Another approach to Talons is to buy a low-power shield and as much engine power as you can, then use constant afterburners and continuously-firing guns to harass and destroy an opponent.

Table 2.52 shows the specifications for the Talon.

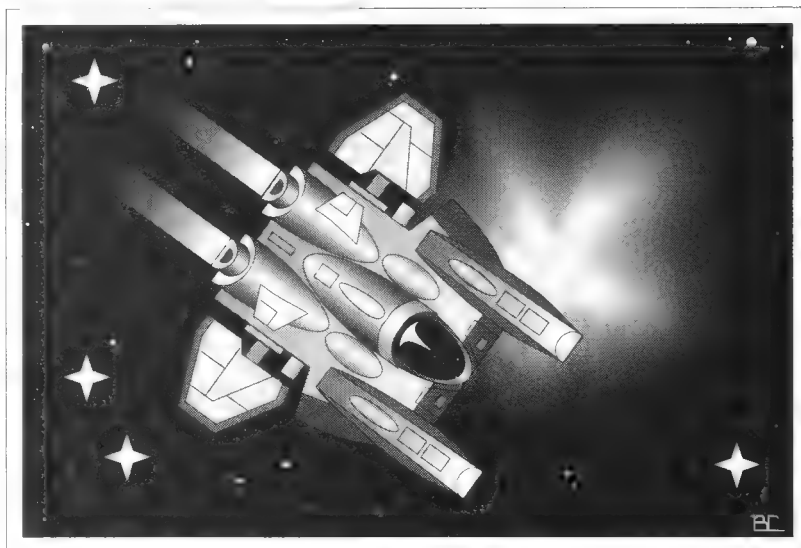
TABLE 2.52: *Talon Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Light Fighter
Length	11 meters
Mass	11 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1000 kps
Acceleration	Very Good
Maximum Pitch	60 dps
Maximum Yaw	60 dps
Maximum Roll	60 dps
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Particle Cannon, Heat-Seeking Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 10 cm; Aft Shield: 9 cm; Front: 8 cm; Right: 8 cm; Left: 8 cm; Rear: 8 cm.

DEMON

Demons are the cheaper of the ships used by mercenaries. As long as you don't take jobs that require killing mercenaries, then you won't have to tangle with these, except for a few missions in the Basra system.

Table 2.53 shows the specifications for the Demon.



SPECIFICATIONS

Class	Bounty Hunter Light Fighter
Length	12 meters
Mass	13 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	450 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps
Acceleration	Very Good
Maximum Pitch	72 dps
Maximum Yaw	45 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps
Ship's Weapons	Lasers (2), Meson Blasters (2), Heat-Seeking Missiles (2), Torpedoes (10)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 14 cm; Aft Shield: 12 cm; Front: 9 cm; Right: 9 cm; Left: 9 cm; Rear: 9 cm.

DRAYMAN MARK II

This ship is only “Mark II” because Origin gave it more curves than the old Drayman. The one thing to note about Draymen is that they’re often piloted by merchants, and merchants are dangerous in a firefight. If you ever find yourself defending a merchant from some pirates, be sure to watch not only the pirates—watch the merchant. Once they start firing, they tend to fire at everything in sight, including their benefactors.

Table 2.54 shows the specifications for the Drayman.

TABLE 2.54: *Drayman Mark II Specifications (review)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Merchant Ship
Length	96 meters
Mass	2,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	150 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	10 dps
Maximum Yaw	10 dps
Maximum Roll	10 dps

TABLE 2.54: *Drayman Mark II Specifications (review) (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Ship's Weapons	Meson Blasters (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 35 cm; Aft Shield: 30 cm; Front: 28 cm; Right: 28 cm; Left: 28 cm; Rear: 28 cm.

GLADIUS

The Gladius is better shielded than a Talon, but it's got weaker guns. Only the local cops ("militia") use them, so you'll probably never run afoul of them. If you do fight with a Gladius, you'll probably have a better gun than it does. You can just attack it head-on and blow it up before you lose your shields.

Table 2.55 shows the specifications for the Gladius.

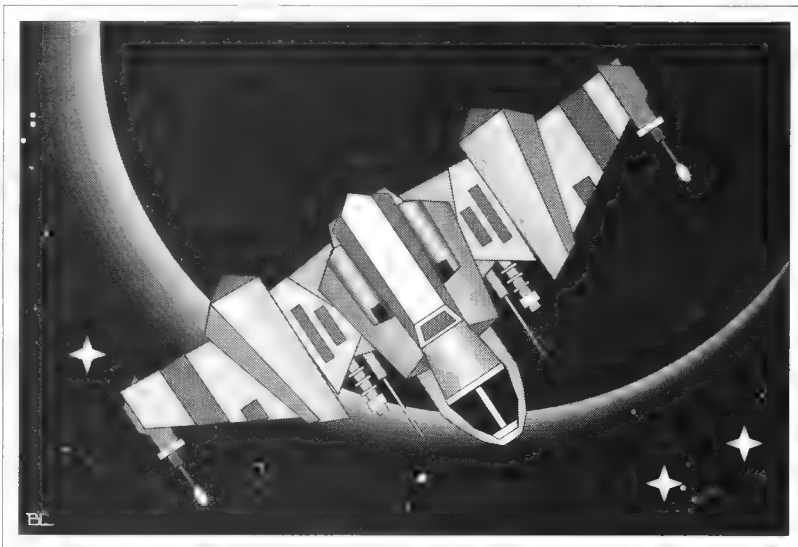


TABLE 2.55: *Gladius Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Militia Light Fighter
Length	12.5 meters
Mass	13 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1000 kps
Acceleration	Very Good
Maximum Pitch	72 dps
Maximum Yaw	72 dps
Maximum Roll	72 dps
Ship's Weapons	Lasers (2), Particle Cannon, Heat-Seeking Missiles (2), Torpedoes (8)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 14 cm; Aft Shield: 10 cm; Front: 8 cm; Right: 8 cm; Left: 8 cm; Rear: 8 cm



PARADIGM

A Paradigm is kind of like a Gilgamesh from Wing Commander II. For some reason, however, it does not have phase shields; four tachyon guns can put out enough power to destroy it, although it takes some time. Why you'd want to destroy a Paradigm is another question, however—there's nothing of any value on a

Paradigm except possibly for some ejected pilots, who can be picked up and then sold as slaves.

Table 2.56 shows the specifications for the Paradigm.

TABLE 2.56: *Paradigm Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Confederation Capital Ship
Length	350 meters
Mass	17,000 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	200 kps
Cruise Velocity	125 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	10 kps
Maximum Yaw	10 kps
Maximum Roll	10 kps
Ship's Weapons	Meson Blasters (2), Tachyon Cannon (2), Ionic Pulse Cannon, Turreted Lasers (3), Turreted Mass Drivers (3), Dumb-Fire Missiles (10), Heat-Seeking Missile, Image-Recognition Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 80 cm; Aft Shield: 50 cm; Front: 65 cm; Right: 65 cm; Left: 65 cm; Rear: 65 cm



STILETTO

The Stiletto is basically a Sabre. The only reason why you'd tangle with this is that there's a mission where the ConFeds know that you're harboring a felon. Do not fight the Stilettos; just out-run them and deliver your cargo.

Table 2.57 shows the specifications for the Stiletto.

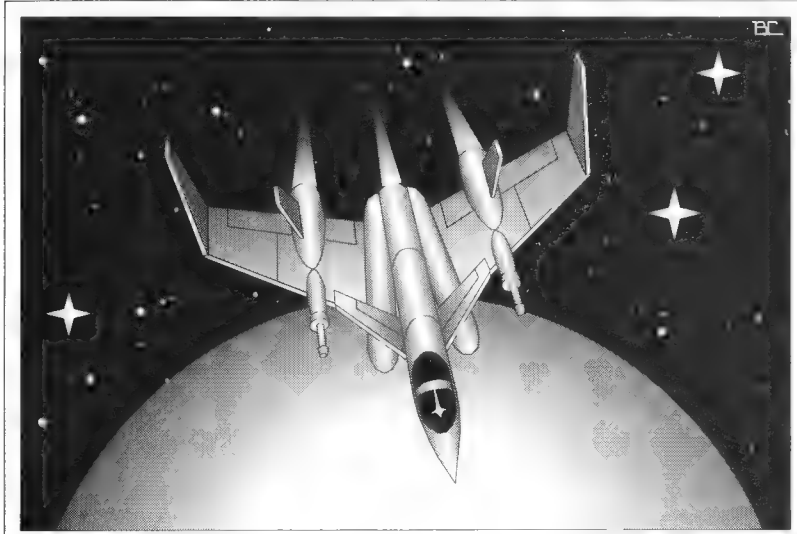
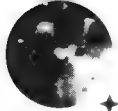


TABLE 2.57: *Stiletto Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Confederation Light Fighter
Length	12.5 meters
Mass	13 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	500 kps
Cruise Velocity	300 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1400 kps
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	90 dps

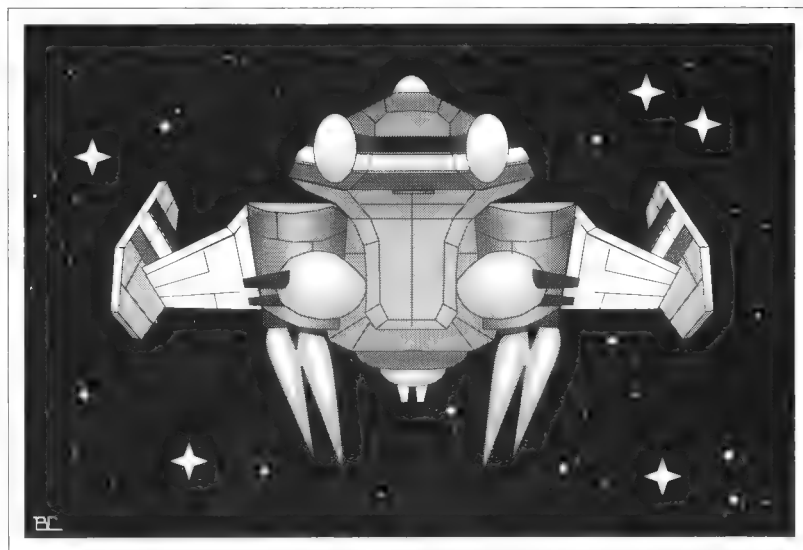
**TABLE 2.57:** *Stiletto Specifications (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Heat-Seeking Missiles (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 9 cm; Aft Shield: 8 cm; Front: 7 cm; Right: 7 cm; Left: 7 cm; Rear: 7 cm

BROADSWORD

It's not clear why a Broadsword is used by the ConFeds to keep order in Human space; after all, the Broadsword is a bomber. Perhaps they're kept around to destroy pirate bases. Again, there's no reason to tangle with these ships.

Table 2.58 shows the specifications for the Broadsword.



**TABLE 2.58:** *Broadsword Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Confederation Heavy Fighter
Length	24 meters
Mass	22 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	350 kps
Cruise Velocity	150 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Average
Maximum Pitch	51 dps
Maximum Yaw	51 dps
Maximum Roll	51 dps
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (3), Friend-or-Foe Missiles (6), Heat-Seeking Missiles (3), Turreted Lasers (2), Turreted Particle Cannon (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 25 cm; Aft Shield: 20 cm; Front: 17.5 cm; Right: 17.5 cm; Left: 17.5 cm; Rear: 17.5 cm

DRALTHI

The flying bull's-eye returns! It's interesting to fight a Dralhti in Privateer, as they're so darn tough to kill in this game. The whole exercise just underscores the fact that the ships that you get to fly in this game just aren't as good as the ones that you flew in the ConFed navy.

Dralthis are fast, but they've got only lasers, the weakest gun in the game. Take them on head-on, and you'll blow them up before they kill your shields. Then run away, recharge your shields, and return. If you must fight Dralthis in the asteroid fields, then use the technique outlined for fighting Talons—target one Dralthis with your targeting computer, and lob missiles at it while you fire at the other Dralthis. You can then attack two Dralthis at the same time.

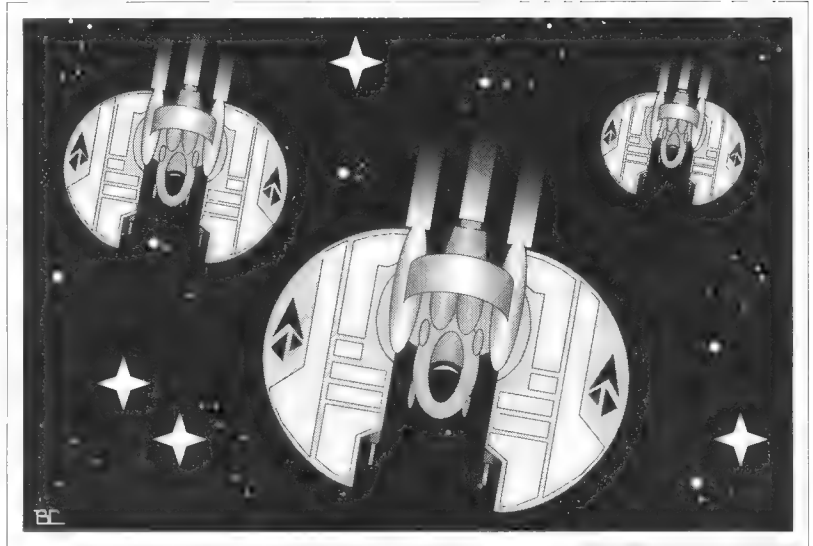


TABLE 2.59: *Dralthis Specifications*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Light Fighter
Length	28 meters
Mass	14 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	400 kps
Cruise Velocity	230 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1000 kps
Acceleration	Excellent
Maximum Pitch	90 dps
Maximum Yaw	90 dps
Maximum Roll	90 dps

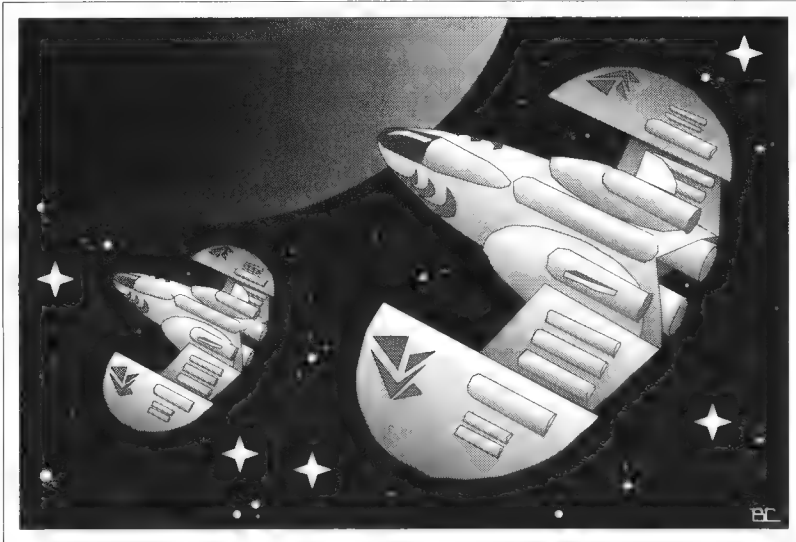
TABLE 2.59: *Dralthi Specifications (continued)***SPECIFICATIONS**

Ship's Weapons	Lasers (3), Dumb-Fire Missiles (3)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 15 cm; Aft Shield: 13.5 cm; Front: 9 cm; Right: 9 cm; Left: 9 cm; Rear: 9 cm

GOTHRI

You could really learn to hate this ship in Wing Commander II. You'll loathe and despise it in Privateer. It's generally as fast as you, well armored, and well endowed with guns. On top of that, it's got a rear turret.

Use the missiles to slow it down, then tachyon guns to destroy it. You can actually use its relative lack of maneuverability (it is nimble, but not as much as some of the other Privateer ships) when fighting in an asteroid field. Use the afterburners very gently when an opening appears, and duck around rocks; the Gothri won't always be able to turn quickly enough, and they're history. Even better, sometimes a pack of them will get



so bloodthirsty that they'll all rush you as you duck behind an asteroid, and they'll collide.

Table 2.60 shows the specifications for the Gothri.

TABLE 2.60: *Gothri Specifications (review)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Medium Fighter
Length	12 meters
Mass	14 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	450 kps
Cruise Velocity	250 kps
Afterburner Velocity	1200 kps
Acceleration	Very Good
Maximum Pitch	60 dps
Maximum Yaw	60 dps
Maximum Roll	60 dps
Ship's Weapons	Mass Drivers (2), Particle Cannon (2), Friend or Foe Missile, Dumb-Fire Missile, Image-Recognition-Missiles (3), Turreted Laser, Turreted Meson Blaster
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 17.5 cm; Aft Shield: 17.5 cm; Front: 15 cm; Right: 15 cm; Left: 15 cm; Rear: 15 cm

KAMEKH

The Kamekh returns in one mission of Privateer, escorted by two Gothri. It's pretty much unchanged from its role and powers in earlier

games. As it's large and clumsy, but well-shielded, just destroy its fighter escort, and then just pound at it with your guns until it's destroyed.

Table 2.61 shows the specifications for the Kamekh.

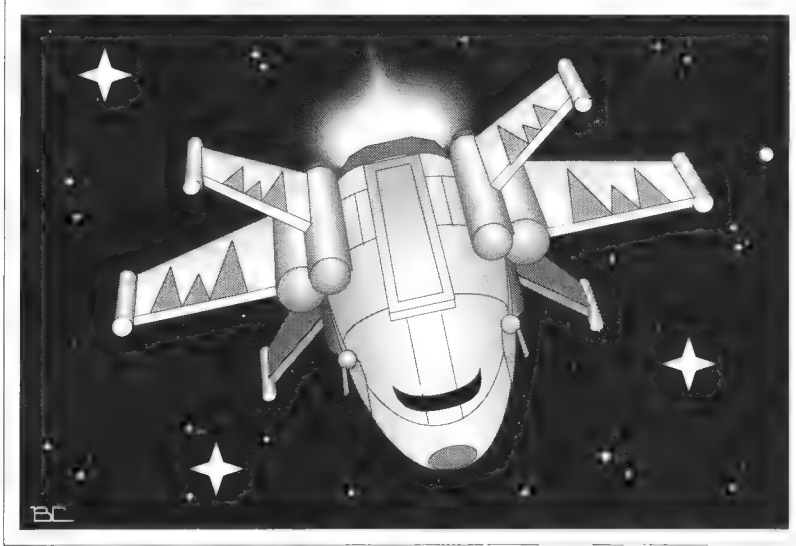
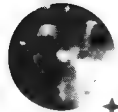


TABLE 2.61: *Kamekh Specifications (review)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Class	Capital Ship
Length	135 meters
Mass	1,300 tonnes
Maximum Velocity	300 kps
Cruise Velocity	100 kps
Afterburner Velocity	NA
Acceleration	Poor
Maximum Pitch	20 dps
Maximum Yaw	20 dps
Maximum Roll	20 dps

**TABLE 2.61:** *Kamekh Specifications (review) (continued)*

SPECIFICATIONS	
Ship's Weapons	Image-Recognition Missiles (2), Heat-Seeking Missile, Dumb-Fire Missiles (10), Ionic Pulse Cannon, Meson Blasters (2), Tachyon Cannon (2), Turreted Lasers (4), Turreted Plasma Cannon (2)
Ship's Armor	Fore Shield: 70 cm; Aft Shield: 40 cm; Front: 55 cm; Right: 55 cm; Left: 55 cm; Rear: 55 cm

The Wing Commander universe has blessed us space-warrior wannabees with a whole bunch of ships to fly and to battle with. Now that you know the strengths and weaknesses of each of these ships, you'll be better prepared to take the day, no matter what you find yourself up against.

**THE WEAPONS
OF WING
COMMANDER**



T H R E E



Much of the playing of Wing Commander requires destroying enemy ships. Destroying an enemy ship is straightforward: First you knock out its shields, then you burn away its armor, and finally you rupture its fusion reactor, causing a small thermonuclear explosion. (You're only vaguely aware of these processes; all you really need do is to just keep firing and dodge the return fire, and you'll eventually be rewarded with an explosion.)

The weapons of Wing Commander are mainly intended to do varying amounts of damage on enemy ships. (There is one defensive weapon, a chaff pod.) The weapons fall into a few basic categories:

- Guns/cannons
- Missiles
- Mines
- Chaff pods

In this chapter, you'll learn how to use each of these weapons for maximum effectiveness.

GUNS

The weapons that you'll use the most are the guns. The guns of Wing Commander aren't guns in the sense that they fire bullets; rather, these guns are energy weapons. Energy is stored in a gun capacitor, and is then funneled through discharge mechanisms of various kinds to produce energy bolts of different speeds, power, and devastation levels. The capacitor is charged from energy generated by the engines.

Before the release of Privateer, we really didn't have too much hard information about the relative effectiveness of the different guns. But the



Privateer documentation offers three very important pieces of data: refire delay, energy expenditure, and armor damage for each kind of gun.

Refire delay tells how long you must wait between gun blasts. The laser gun can pump out a little over three bursts per second, but the plasma gun can only squeeze off 1.2 shots per second. (These numbers assume that you've got the guns charged up enough to be able to produce the shot; if your gun capacitors are temporarily depleted, either because you've been firing too fast or because the engines are overloaded, then you won't see this rapid a rate of fire.) Refire delay is important because it doesn't matter how devastating a blast a gun makes if you can fire it only once an hour—in the meanwhile, you'll be chewed to bits by enemy fire. The laser gun is fastest here, and the plasma gun is the slowest.

Energy expenditure asks how much energy (in gigajoules, or GJ) the engines must produce to charge up the gun capacitors. That's why, in Privateer, you can't buy one of those really nasty-looking plasma guns and get any kind of decent use out of it; the plasma guns just require too much juice to make them work. Again, the laser is lightest on the energy, at 4 gigajoules per shot, and the plasma gun requires the most energy per shot—22 gigajoules.

Armor damage tells how many centimeters of durasteel armor (or the equivalent in shield strength) each energy blast will inflict on enemy shields. A look at the armor-damage numbers reveals why the laser gun, which fires so quickly and which uses so few gigajoules of energy, isn't very effective. Each laser hit will remove only 1.8 cm of armor; in contrast, one plasma hit will peel off 7.2 cm of armor.

Table 3.1 shows the known statistics for Wing Commander guns.

Does all this mean that you should rush out and equip your Centurion with four plasma guns? Definitely not. As the guns get more devastating, they also cost more in terms of energy drain, reducing the number of shots that you can produce. Furthermore, some of the powerful guns shoot slowly, producing fewer shots per second than the lower-power guns. What's the best compromise?

Well, we can compute a couple of useful indexes of gun effectiveness. The first question to ask is: Let's assume that we had unlimited energy.

TABLE 3.1: Gun Characteristics

Name	Max Range (mrrs)	Velocity (kps)	Refire Delay (seconds)	Energy Use (GJ)	Armor Penetration (cm)
Laser	4800	1100	0.3	4	1.8
Mass Driver	3000	1100	0.6	6	2.6
Meson Blaster	4420	1300	0.4	8	3.2
Neutron Gun	2,500	900	0.65	18	6.2
Particle Cannon	4,500	1000	0.6	11	4.3
Tachyon Cannon	2,500	1250	0.4	8	5
Ionic Pulse Cannon	2,000	1200	0.7	15	5.4
Plasma Gun	2,000	840	0.8	22	7.2

mrrs= meters relative to range and speed

Which gun would produce the most damage per second? (This is not necessarily unrealistic. In Privateer, you can essentially get unlimited energy by diverting power from the shields to the guns. In the other games, you can fly around until you've got a fully-charged gun capacitor, then rush at the enemy and, for a brief time, fire the guns at their maximum firing rate. Given the thin nature of some ships' shields, one well-planned pass may be sufficient to annihilate some enemies.) You can compute the maximum damage per second by dividing the armor damage by the fire rate. The results appear in Table 3.2.

Viewed in this way, the tachyon cannon is far and away the most appealing of the guns. The neutron gun is second, and the plasma gun is a poor third.

But there's another way to analyze gun effectiveness. Your ship has an energy budget that looks like this: The engine *produces* energy, and the



TABLE 3.2: *Theoretical Maximum Damage per second for Wing Commander Guns (from most to least damage)*

GUN	MAX DAMAGE PER SECOND (CM DURASTEEL EQUIVALENT)
Tachyon gun	12.50
Neutron gun	9.54
Meson blaster	8.00
Ionic pulse cannon	7.71
Particle cannon	7.17
Laser gun	6.00
Mass driver	4.33

guns *use* energy. To be a more effective killing machine, your ship must either get better engines, which is usually not possible (I assume that you're either flying a Privateer ship with the maximum engine upgrade, or one of the other games, which don't give you any options on engines), or you've got to do more with the energy that you've got. To that end, let's look at how many gigajoules of energy it costs to toast one centimeter of enemy shielding. You derive that number by dividing armor damage inflicted on each shot by energy drain per shot. Call this the "energy efficiency" of the gun. The results appear in Table 3.3.

TABLE 3.3: *Energy efficiency of each Wing Commander gun (in descending order)*

GUN	DESTRUCTIVE EFFICIENCY (CM OF ARMOR DESTROYED PER GJ OF ENERGY INPUT)
Tachyon cannon	0.63
Laser gun	0.45
Mass driver	0.43
Meson blaster	0.40

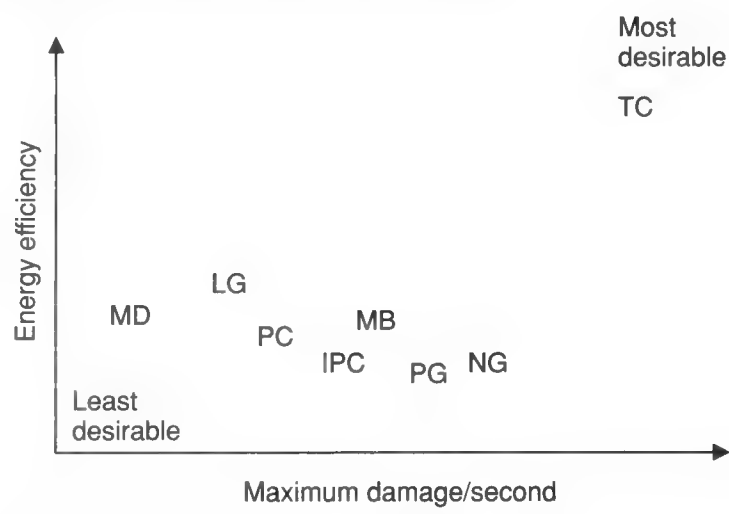
TABLE 3.3: *Energy efficiency of each Wing Commander gun (in descending order)*
(continued)

GUN	DESTRUCTIVE EFFICIENCY (CM OF ARMOR DESTROYED PER GJ OF ENERGY INPUT)
Particle cannon	0.39
Ionic pulse cannon	0.36
Neutron gun	0.34
Plasma gun	0.33

Again the tachyon cannon comes out on top, demonstrating that it is quite stingy in converting your hard-earned gigajoules into destructive force—one gigajoule of energy vaporizes 0.63 centimeters of armor. The other guns that rated well on maximum damage per second—the neutron gun and the plasma gun—turn out to buy that devastating power at the cost of energy inefficiency.

You’d like both energy efficiency *and* good theoretical maximum damage per second. Graph the efficiency versus maximum damage, and you get what you see here. (For those trying to reproduce this graph, I normalized the energy efficiency and maximum damage per second numbers by subtracting their means and dividing by their standard deviations.)

What’s the moral of the story? Well, first, when playing Privateer, buy tachyon cannons. Second, when playing the other games, pay attention to which guns you’ve got enabled.





In particular, let's take a look at the ships of Wing Commander II that give you a multi-gun option. That would be the Sabre (two mass drivers, two particle cannons), the Crossbow (three mass drivers, two neutron guns) and the Rapier F-44G (two laser cannons, two particle cannons).

The Sabre has two fairly destructive guns. The particle cannon is powerful, but—despite the official destructiveness ratings—it seems a trifle less effective than the mass driver. The particle cannon is, however, blessed by a range of almost 5,000 meters. Line up behind a Dorkathi, and it'll take about 23 particle cannon shots to destroy the enemy transport. The mass drivers seem more destructive; it took only 17 of them to destroy the Dorkathi. On the other hand, the mass drivers only work close-in, under 3,000 meters. Are dual guns the best strategy, or is one of the two guns a better bet? It seems that if you can get close into the enemy, then dual guns is the better approach: With dual guns enabled, the Dorkathi crew was breathing vacuum after only seven shots. That not only took fewer shots, by the way, it also took less time—an important factor to consider when under heavy flak barrage.

The Rapier has the weak, but long-range, laser guns, coupled with the powerful, and long-range, particle cannons. Eight laser/particle shots destroyed the Dorkathi, and from the comfortable distance of 4500 meters. That gives the Rapier a long arm—something to remember when fighting tough enemies. The bad guys with the neutron guns can't get at you when you're almost 5,000 meters away, but the Rapier can get them. The Rapier's relatively weak shields (compared to the Sabre's) underscore the importance of using both guns simultaneously. When attacking the Dorkathi with either lasers or particle cannon on their own, it took much longer to get the job done, and it was quite difficult to destroy the enemy transport without losing total shields; with both gun types, however, it was a simple matter to park 4500 meters off its tail, set speed at 100 kps, and watch the fireworks as it exploded.

The experience of the Rapier and the Sabre might lead you to think that having multiple guns is always desirable. But the Crossbow provides an interesting counterexample. The Crossbow has two short-range, devastating guns—a three-barrel mass driver and two neutron guns. Having five armor-ripping weapons sounds good, but it isn't. The problem is that the five guns all draw a lot of power, and so the firing capacitor gets

worn out in no time at all. In a test in which I destroyed a Dorkathi first with all guns enabled versus just the triple mass driver, I found that it was much easier to destroy a Dorkathi with just the three-gun mass driver than it was to destroy it with all five guns blazing.

MISSILES

Missiles are small, self-propelled projectiles loaded with an explosive warhead. Some are self-guided, and can follow an enemy using either the heat generated by the enemy's exhaust, the way its ship looks (image recognition), or whether or not its communications unit is broadcasting ConFed recognition signals (identification of friend or foe).

New pilots often expect more of missiles than the missiles can deliver. They're good, but they require some setup time (the smart missiles must lock), and there are effective countermeasures that the enemy can use. When they do work, however, missiles can be pretty wonderful.

Here are a few pieces of advice when using missiles. First, as missiles do require some setup time, save them for when your enemy is more interested in avoiding you, such as when you've got him on the ropes. Missiles are a great way to finish off a Jalthi or Grantha that you're tired of jousting with. If their shields are already knocked down or are very weak, just squeeze off a missile and watch the show.

Second, missiles work better against big, slow-moving targets than they do against faster targets. If you do manage to lock a fast-moving target like a Drakhri, Sartha, or a Strakha with an image-recognition missile, then just one missile will obliterate the craft; but getting the lock in the first place takes so much time as the enemy zigzags around that it's just as quick to fire your guns at the fighter. A heavier fighter like a Grikath or a Jalkehi will require three missiles to destroy it. Further, Grikaths are nearly impossible to destroy with missiles for three reasons: 1) they're nimble and fast; 2) they have and effectively use chaff pods; and 3) they can shoot down missiles. (Now, I'd say that this is massively unfair, as I've seen missiles and fired on missiles, but it seems that Kilrathi missiles cannot be shot down—perhaps they have phase shields?) Faster ships can actually outrun missiles, as you've probably discovered—and if you



didn't know it, then one way to avoid an incoming missile is to kick in the afterburners and outrun it.

Third, when you use a missile, for heaven's sake, stop firing until you're sure that the missile is out of gun range! It may be impossible to shoot down Kilrathi missiles, but it's quite simple to shoot down your own missiles, quite simple indeed.

Each missile type has its strengths and weaknesses. Knowing how to use each missile will make getting missions done easier.

DUMB-FIRE (DF) MISSILES

A *dumb-fire* or DF missile is a simple ballistic missile. You just point it at something and fire it. If the object is within the missile's range, and the object doesn't move then the missile detonates its warhead on the



object. You can see a picture of a dumb-fire missile here.

Dumb-fire missiles are obviously useful against stationary objects; for that reason, they're really useful when polishing off a capital ship in Wing Commander I—although you'll read in the next chapter that it's probably best to stick to the guns in Wing Commander—but that advantage goes away in Wing Commander II, as most of the big targets have phase shields that are impervious to missiles and guns. What, then, are dumb-fire missiles good for in Wing Commander II? Not much, except for one case. If you're at point-blank range to a ship, within 500 meters of it, fire a dumb-fire missile. If the ship's on the ropes, then you may destroy it. If not, you may cause it to tumble for a few seconds, giving you a chance to open fire on it without receiving return fire. This isn't a theoretical suggestion—I've destroyed Drakhri with dumb-fires. I just wait until they're boring right in on me, then I launch the DF right in their faces! (Of course, if you do it when you're too close to them, then the blast will damage your ship as well.) Even better, just one DF will destroy a Drakhri.

Be careful where you point a dumb-fire missile! If you fire it at an enemy ship, and the enemy ship dodges, then whatever's behind that enemy ship will be hit by the dumb-fire missile. That could be very

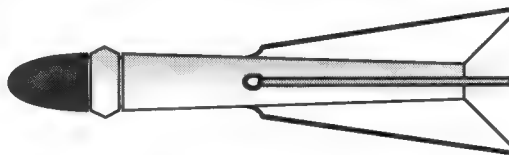
frustrating if the other ship was the Dorkir that you were escorting or, worse, the Tiger's Claw. (Imagine the chewing-out you'd get from Halcyon!)

HEAT-SEEKING (HS) MISSILES

Heat seekers are fast, reliable missiles that work by locking onto the heat of a ship's ion exhaust, then flying quickly to get to that exhaust, and finally exploding in the tailpipe of the ship. Heat seekers are particularly effective because they always deliver their payload to the rear of the ship, where the shielding is weakest. For example, two heat-seeking missiles can destroy a Jalkehi; in contrast, that usually takes three image-recognition missiles, as the image-recognition missiles may end up exploding on different parts of the enemy ship, and are likely to hit somewhere other than the tail end of the Kilrathi.

Heat seekers are a pain to lock, however, as you've got to be right behind a ship for about three seconds to get a lock; in contrast, image-recognition missiles will lock from any attitude, and friend-or-foe missiles don't require a lock at all.

Heat seekers, like the one you see here, can be confused by other heat signatures. Suppose you lock an HS missile onto a Grikath (good luck!) that's menacing a Clydesdale. Your wingman squeezes off a good shot, and destroys the Grikath. What does the heat seeker



do now? Look for another heat signature, that's what—like the heat signature of the Clydesdale's exhaust! When locking a heat seeker, look at what's behind the ship you're targeting. If it's more bad guys, then fine, go ahead and launch the missile. But if it's something that you're supposed to be defending, then fly around some more and get a better lock.

IMAGE-RECOGNITION (IR) MISSILES

Image-recognition missiles use an onboard "expert system," a minor form of artificial intelligence that analyzes pictures and attempts to recognize familiar forms. The expert system in the guidance computer of the IR missile must "see" the target for a few seconds to "memorize" its



look. Then, once launched, the missile follows the memorized ship until it reaches it—at which point the missile explodes—or until the missile

runs out of fuel. You can see an IR missile here.

IR missiles are very good at tracking their quarry. They never get confused, as HS missiles do when the quarry is no longer present,

and they turn quickly in pursuit of prey, unlike the friend-or-foe missiles. Because IR missiles are easier to lock than are HS missiles, you may want to use them when you're feeling lazy or in a rush, as you may be if you're defending a ship from four or five Sartha. The Sartha are fast, and so may be able to avoid the missile, but if they don't put all of their energy into avoiding the missile, then it'll get them—and one hit's all it takes to destroy a Sartha.

FRIEND-OR-FOE (FF) MISSILES

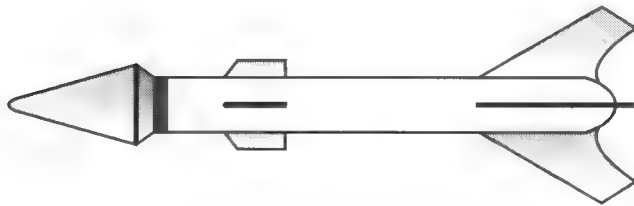
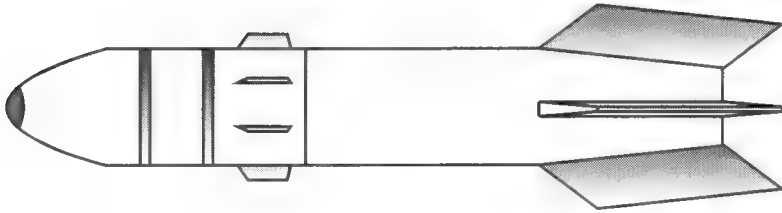
All ConFed ships are equipped with a communications unit for inter-ship communication. But the comm unit has another purpose, as well; it continually broadcasts an encrypted message that says, in effect, "I am a friend." As the Kilrathi ships don't broadcast that message, it was simple for the Confederation scientists to build a missile that homes on to ships that don't broadcast the "I am a friend" signal. That missile is called the Identification Friend-or-Foe missile, or FF missile for short.

FF missiles don't need a target lock before they can be fired. They just find and lock onto the nearest ship not broadcasting the FF message. The

illustration here shows a friend-or-foe missile.

That sounds good, but FF missiles aren't all that useful. You see, as they lock onto the nearest en-

emy ship, it's difficult to launch two or three FFs in sequence at a single ship. Instead, the FFs tend to scatter to the four winds, delivering one



damaging but not deadly blow to each of a number of ships. Missiles shouldn't annoy; missiles should destroy.

The second problem with FF missiles is that they'll lock onto a ConFed ship if that ship's comm unit is malfunctioning. That includes your ship, by the way. Fire off an FF while your comm unit is down, and you'll explode a missile in your own face.

The third problem with the FF missiles is that they don't turn all that fast, and spend precious time weaving around looking for the target. Most FF missiles seem to end up expending their fuel and exploding harmlessly.

The best way to use an FF is against a single target that's relatively far away (7,000–4,000 clicks) and accelerating towards you. Then the FF missile needn't do any figuring out which target to acquire (there's only one), and it needn't do much turning (the target's coming quickly at you).

Table 3.4 shows the known characteristics of these common missiles.

TABLE 3.4: *Missile Characteristics*

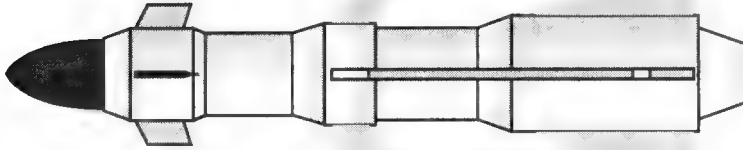
Name	Length (m)	Max Range (m)	Effective Range (m)	Armor Penetrati on (cm)	Refire Delay (sec.)	Velocity (kps)	Max ypr (dps)
Dumb-Fire (DF)	2.6	10,000	2,000	13	2.5	900	100
Heat-Seeker (HS)	2	9,000	6,000	16	2.5	800	100
Image-Recognition (IR)	2.2	9,000	6,000	17	2.5	800	100
Friend or Foe (FF)	2.2	12,000	8,000	17	2.5	800	100



PROTON TORPEDOES

Proton torpedoes (shown here) appear in Privateer as powerful dumb-fire missiles. Another weapon with the same name, also known as just

“torpedoes” or “shipkiller torpedoes,” appears in the other Wing Commander II games. For this section, I’ll discuss the latter torpedo.



Torpedoes will only work against a capital ship; they will not lock onto a smaller

craft. Torpedoes must be locked onto a target, and then the torpedo must analyze the shielding of the target before it can launch. This can be a fairly lengthy (20-second) process, and it’s complicated by the fact that you can’t make any sudden course changes, or you lose the lock.

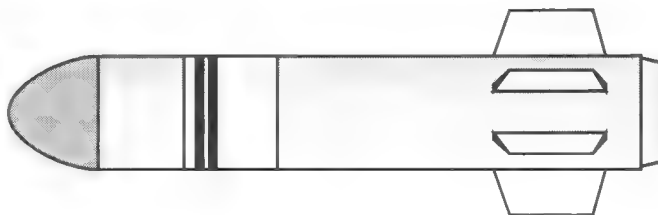
Without the use of afterburners or significant directional changes, a ship on a bombing run is very vulnerable to attack both from escort fighters and the flak and antimatter guns of the capital ship.

Once a torpedo has been launched, it can be destroyed by flak from the capital ship, so it’s a good idea to get as close as possible before releasing the torpedo. Dorkathi and Kamekh, ships without phase shields, can be destroyed with one torpedo, but Ralatha, Fralthra, and fixed bases often require two or, occasionally, three torpedoes before they’ll bite the dust.

There’s more on attacking capital ships in the next chapter, but the basics are that you should first eliminate all fighter cover. Charge your shields up to the maximum, then come slowly in towards the capital ship, waiting for your lock. When you’re just about to get the lock, speed up, get to about 3,000 meters from the target, and release the torpedo—and then turn around and get out of there as quickly as you can! If you need to fire more than one torpedo, turn around and get out of the range of the flak guns, then come back and finish the job.

MACE

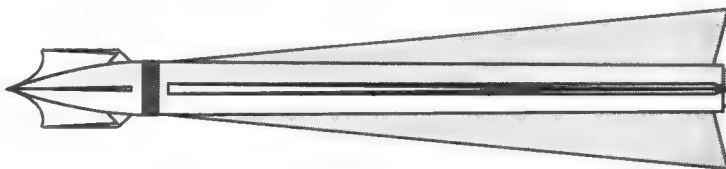
The Mace is a dumb-fire missile found only on the Morningstar. The neat thing about the Mace is the warhead that you see here—a tactical nuclear warhead. It will kill anything, but only one of those things. If three Dorkathi are so close together that they can touch, then the Mace will only blow up the one that it strikes; there's no collateral damage, unfortunately, except for you. If you're too close to the Mace when it explodes, then you'll die as well.



The Mace is good against ships with phase shields, as you needn't mess around with targeting it. Just point it at the ship or base and fire it. To lay down a pattern of fire, try firing the Mace into the middle of a bunch of fighters, then detonate it with your guns (from a few thousand clicks away, of course). I once launched a Mace into a pack of Drakhri who were about 3,000 km away from me, then blew up the Mace at about 1,500 km away. The resulting blast cost me my forward shields and some forward armor, but it destroyed all five enemies in one shot! (You won't find that in any Wing Commander missions, by the way—that's a scenario I cooked up with Wing Commander Academy.)

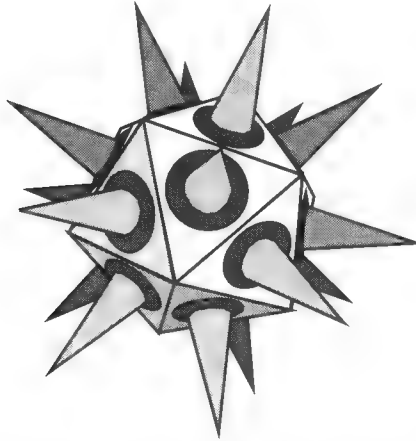
LEECH

The Leech only appears as a missile on the Wraith, which is only available in Academy. It temporarily drains phase shields (and other kinds of shields) from a ship, allowing you about half a minute to finish it off. It uses an IR-type homing mechanism. The illustration here shows a Leech missile.



MINES

There's only one mine (see the illustration) that appears in the Wing Commander games, besides the mines that you encounter sometimes—



the porcupine mine on the Raptor in Wing Commander I. It's a proximity mine, and truthfully it's not of much use. But here's one way to use it.

Suppose you drop out of autonav mode, and find a wing of four Krants coming at you. Select the porcupine mine, and fly at afterburner speed right in amongst them. About two seconds be-

fore you reach the pack, drop the mine and keep on going. They often can't turn in time, and someone runs into the mine. It doesn't destroy the Krant, but it'll hit it pretty hard. Find the damaged Krant and make that your first victim. With a full gun capacitor, that should be no problem, and *voilà!* the odds look better already!

CHAFF POD

Some ships are equipped with a limited number of chaff pods. These devices are designed to fool a missile into homing in on them, not your ship. For example, suppose you're flying a Broadsword, and get jumped by a wing of Sarthas. They're fast and agile, making it hard for you to target them, and their neutron guns are making swiss cheese out of your shields. To make things worse, they launch a bunch of missiles, and all of a sudden there are more yellow dots on the scanner than there are red dots! If all of those missiles hit you, you're toast. Drop a chaff pod, set the speed at maximum, and get out of there, and you might live. The chaff pod will attract the missiles, which will all explode together at the chaff pod, making a pretty big explosion that you don't want to be anywhere around. While you're running, you can use your turrets to

hold off the Sartha. Now that they've exhausted their missiles, you may be able to pick them off....

Only use chaff pods when there is more than one missile coming at you. There's no sense in wasting them otherwise. And if, when you're attacked, you don't already have the "weapons" readout set to "chaff pod," then don't bother trying to select the chaff pod; in a dogfight, you just don't have the time needed to select and launch a new weapon—you could be shooting in that time.

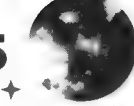
TRACTOR BEAM

Several Wing Commander II missions require that you retrieve a data capsule or an ejected pilot with either the Broadsword, Sabre, or Crossbow's tractor beam. If you want to engage in a little piracy in Privateer, then you do it by first blowing up a merchant ship, and then retrieving the cargo that floats by; the cargo can be sold, and the ejected crew can be sold as slaves (yes, it *is* sick, isn't it?).

The Wing Commander II tractor beam works differently than that Privateer tractor beam, so let's take the Wing Commander II one first. To bring in an object, use these steps:

- 1** Get close to the object. It will get larger as it gets closer. Get right up behind it.
- 2** As you get near to the object, slow down to about 70 to 100 kps. Once the object is right up against your viewscreen, slow to 40-60 kps and then switch views back to the rear turret.
- 3** Press the **G** key to select the tractor beam. Center the object in your sights, and press the fire button. You'll see a sphere of energy form around the object, and the object will be drawn into your cargo bay.

If, on the other hand, the object doesn't get drawn in, but you see it form a sphere, then that means that you were too far away. (And if the targeting brackets never appeared at all, then you were much too far away.) Make another pass, and try it again. Try getting right up to the object, so it fills up your viewscreen, at a low speed—under 100 kps. You



want the pod to pass your front viewscreen and drift to the rear turret, where you can tractor beam it in. Once the pod has disappeared, because it has passed your forward viewscreen, drop speed to 20 kps and switch to the rear turret. Enable the tractor beam and center the yellow dot on the VDU. If it appears to be centered, but you can't see the data pod, don't worry about it; that means that the pod is moving over the ship, and in seconds will appear right in your crosshair. When it does, it'll be big, meaning that it's close by. Just "fire" the tractor beam with either the gun- or weapon-firing buttons, and you'll suck that object right in. If it doesn't work the first time, don't get frustrated. Just keep working at it, and you'll get it. And, by the way—you can use the tractor beam from either of the side turrets in addition to the rear turret one the Broadsword, no matter what the game documentation says.

In Privateer, the tractors work in a similar manner, but they have a much greater range. You've got to be careful in Privateer how you recover objects, because data pods, pilots, and cargo aren't indestructible like they are in Wing Commander II. If you nudge an object with your ship, you destroy it. For that reason, you can bring in an object like this:

- 1** Switch to the turret that you've mounted the tractor beam on.
- 2** Switch the "weapon" to "tractor beam."
- 3** Acquire and lock onto the item to be drawn in, just as you'd do if you were locking an enemy ship with a gun.
- 4** Press the "fire weapon" button, the ↵ key.
- 5** The tractor beam will now draw the object toward the ship, unless the object is traveling too fast to be captured. Switch to the forward view and chase the object. Once you've got the object locked, don't worry about nudging it—it won't be destroyed if the tractor beam has it locked. Instead, you'll hear the sound of cargo doors slamming shut as the item is drawn into your cargo hold.

Battles aren't won with amazing firepower. Instead, they're won with a steady hand on the firing button and a reasoned use of missiles and mines. Get good with the weapons of Wing Commander, and you can destroy a Sivar with a Hornet!

TACTICS



F O U R



While some missions in Wing Commander are more important than others, winning the Wing Commander games basically boils down to winning missions—and you win missions by skillfully employing your ship and ship's weapons.

This chapter is about doing just that: how to fly and how to apply your ship's resources to the tasks at hand for Wing Commander. We'll start by looking at the details of flying a mission, then we'll move along to dogfighting, and finally we'll look at how to attack—and destroy—capital ships.

FLYING AND WINNING MISSIONS

To win a mission, you've got to get your mission briefing, leave your ship's base, and then fly to your target coordinates—although occasionally, you don't have to fly anywhere; the enemy is already at your doorstep. Then you fulfill your mission objectives, and then travel to your destination base, where you must dock with that base. (In most Wing Commander missions, the destination base is the same as the origination base, but that's not always true.) Then you'll get a debriefing where the game (in the form of some other character in the game) tells you how you did. Then, if you succeeded in your mission, there's only one thing left to do—save the game position.

LEAVING THE BASE

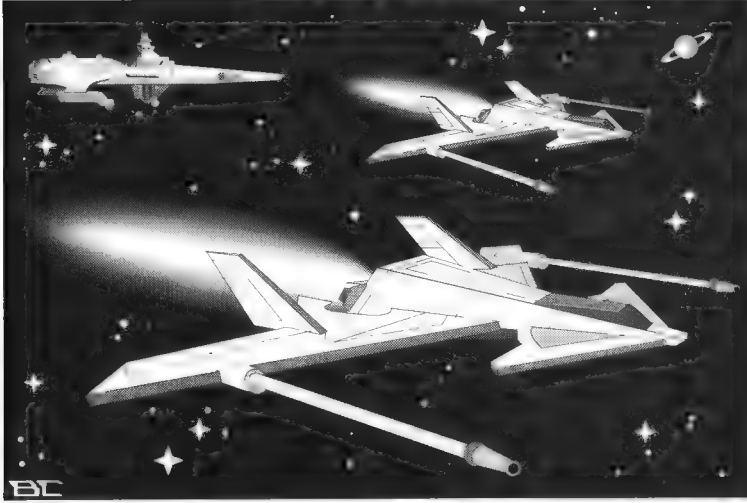
You start each mission with a mission briefing. It's not usually necessary to pay close attention to the details like "you'll rendezvous with an Exeter at nav 2," as those kinds of things are stored by the game and can be recalled from your nav computer while in flight. Now and then, there may be a piece of side information that's important to follow the story



line, like “the transports that you’ll be escorting are bringing a vaccine to the Dakota colony to combat an outbreak of Watson’s Disease.” (That’s from the first Dakota mission in Wing Commander I.) This side information is particularly important in the Wing Commander II games, as there is more of a plot line.

Once you’ve gotten your briefing, you see an animated sequence depicting your ship’s launch. Waiting for these sequences gets pretty old pretty fast,

so you’ll soon learn to press the Esc key to bypass the animation. Then you’ll be out in space, as you see here.



FLYING, FIRING, AND NAVIGATING

Once you’re out in space, the fun begins. You’ve got to pilot the ship, avoid obstacles and chase down the evil Kilrathi menace, navigate, escort ConFed ships, deliver messages, and destroy enemy ships.

Flying Basics

The basics of flying in Wing Commander require being able to control direction, speed, afterburners, guns and the autonav computer.

If you’re going to become a topnotch pilot, then you’d do best to understand right up front that the joystick is useless except as a directional control. Don’t use it to fire guns, launch missiles, engage afterburners, roll the ship, or any of the other things that you can theoretically do with the joystick. The Wing Commander software just isn’t too smart about reading the joystick, and that can get you in trouble. For example, pressing button number two on the joystick lights up the afterburners. Pressing button number one and button number two simultaneously

fires a missile...unless the game doesn't read the joysticks completely accurately, and instead engages the afterburners. Here's the picture: Your shields are damaged, but not totally down, as you swing into position 1500 clicks off the tail of an enemy Fralthi. You lock your heat-seeking missile on the Fralthi's engine exhaust, press buttons one and two to launch the missile...and crash in flames against the enemy capital ship as the game misunderstands your button press, and activates the afterburners, smashing you into the Fralthi's aft end at 1200 kps. (It's happened to me too many times.)

Instead, use a combination of keyboard and joystick; here's how. Use the joystick only as a directional device, a control to point the ship's nose. Hold the joystick in your right hand, and then put your left hand on the keyboard, with one finger on the Tab key and another on the spacebar. Now you can steer with your right hand, and fire the guns and control afterburners with your left hand (the spacebar for the guns, the Tab key for the afterburners).

Navigation Basics

In general, you needn't worry too much about navigation in Wing Commander; the navigation computer (*navcomp*) does it for you. All you need do to get to your next location is to press the **A** key, which activates the autopilot, and *autonavs* you (to use the Wing Commander terminology) to a predetermined point (*nav point*) in space chosen by the Tactical Operations mission specialists. (Next time you get autonavved into an asteroid field, remember who's to blame; there've been a few days that I would have liked to make one of those Tactical Ops boys fly one of their own missions.) You will drop out of autonav mode within a few hundred meters of the nav point, and so you can just press **A** to autonav to the next nav point. You get autonavved further away from a nav point if one of the following things happens:

- You encounter other ships, either friendly or hostile.
- You get close to minefields or asteroid fields.
- You are playing Privateer; for some reason, Privateer insists on dropping you 10,000 km from the nav point, whether there's something there or not.



There are several kinds of nav points:

- Some nav points are arbitrary. If Tactical Ops wants you to fly a diamond-shaped patrol pattern, then they'll lay out three imaginary points in space as nav points. Those three points, in combination with your base station, will form a diamond-shaped pattern.
- Some nav points are jump points, points in the time/space fabric where it's possible to hyperjump to other places in space (see Chapter 6 for more information on how hyperjumps work). Your nav computer will inform you if you're at a jump point. Most ships in Wing Commander are not jump-capable, so jump points are more often things for you to defend rather than things that you can use.
- Some nav points identify an enemy capital ship, a friendly ship that you must escort, or a wing of incoming enemy ships that your base ship's long-range sensors have detected.

When you're out in open space, you can find out where you're supposed to be going by looking for a white cross on your viewscreen. That cross isn't actually out there; it's a head-up display projected onto your viewscreen by the onboard navigational computer. Follow the cross, and you'll be on course. The cross does not appear when the navigational computer is disabled, and it becomes disabled when you've got the targeting computer engaged. (You use the targeting computer when you're dogfighting.) Once you've eliminated or routed the final enemy ship, you can re-engage the navigational computer by pressing **N** once.

By the way, the navigational computer sometimes behaves oddly in that it'll show you the cross, but when you follow the cross and get too close to it, it disappears. You can identify a ghost cross if it disappears when you try to center on it. If that happens, just turn your ship about 90 degrees in any direction, and the actual navigational cross will appear.

You can find out whether you've got the targeting computer or the navigational computer engaged by looking at the video display unit (VDU) in your cockpit; it will indicate which mode you've got engaged.

Attack Basics

Once you've autonavved to the battleground, you'll see enemy ships. What do you do now? Step one is to move up to maximum speed, as that's usually best for dogfighting. Do that by pressing and holding the + key until the numbers on your speed indicator won't go any higher. (An annoying feature of the autonav for every game except Privateer is that they always leave you in cruising speed; there isn't any way to get these games to leave you in maximum speed mode, so you've got to do it by hand every time you drop out of autonav mode.) Press the **T** key to activate the targeting computer. Then go to flight position: Put one hand on the joystick, and the other on the afterburner and firing keys.

You'll see different-colored dots on your radar (the circular display that's usually in the center of your instrument panel); the red dots normally represent enemy ships—"normally" because there is a mission in Secret Missions 2 where an enemy ship, the *Sivar*, shows up as a blue dot the first time that you see it. Turn towards the red dots to bring them into view, and you'll see an enemy ship or enemy ships. Usually there's a wing of enemy fighters about 8000–12,000 km away. They will typically all turn toward you and close the distance between you and them as quickly as possible, so as to attack you.

Destroying an enemy ship is a process of attrition. First you wear down the enemy ship's shields, then its armor, and finally you breach its fusion reactor. That almost always takes a number of shots. Unfortunately, those shots must be in a fairly rapid sequence, because the enemy's shields will reform themselves if given a little time. Since you don't want the enemy's ship to get that time, you've got to hound it, peppering it with shots until it's destroyed.

You will always be attacked by groups of identical fighter ships, except in Privateer, where you'll sometimes engage multiple types of ships simultaneously. The enemy will harry you from all directions, making it easy to lose track of which ships you've damaged, and which ones you haven't touched yet. Damaged enemy ships will try to run about 4000–8000 km away, regenerating their shields while their fellow fighters keep you busy. In order to help you keep track of which ship you're attacking, the targeting computer will let you "lock" the computer on one target;



once you've got a ship in your targeting computer, just press **L**, and the targeting computer will lock that target. Even if the target flies out of view, the targeting computer will keep track of it, at least until it flies out of range (about 15,000–20,000 km; the exact amount varies by ship type—the larger the ship, the longer the range that you can lock onto it for). Locking ships is kind of like having an automatic reminder of which ship you're working on.

You shoot the guns at your opponent by pressing either the spacebar or the first button on the joystick; again, I recommend using the spacebar. You'll see your gun blasts streak toward whatever you've aimed at (the enemy, one hopes). Notice that the gun blasts are not infinitely fast; for that reason, you shouldn't shoot at the enemy's present position—you should shoot at where the enemy will be in an instant or two, “leading” the enemy. That's a bit challenging, but it'll come with practice. Some Wing Commander ships have an Internal Target Tracking System, or ITTS, that will guide you in shooting at a target. It's not perfect, but it's an aid in hitting whatever you're shooting at.

It should be obvious, but stationary and slow-moving objects, or objects of any speed that are coming straight at you or directly away from you, are easiest to hit.

Intermediate Flying

Once you've mastered the basics of flying and combat, then you can hone your fighting edge with a few techniques:

- simplifying your cockpit
- using missiles
- rolls and loops

Ships receive messages in two areas: The message scrolls across the viewscreen, and the speaker's image appears on the VDU. This is annoying for two reasons. First, the message that appears across the viewscreen obscures your view of other ships and objects, and that can be fatal. Second, the other speaker's image appearing on the VDU means that the sensor readout on the targeted enemy ship disappears, leaving you ignorant about its shield and damage status. Fortunately, there's an easy

answer to both of these problems. First, shorten the message duration. Most of the messages don't say anything interesting anyway—you really don't need your viewscreen blocked for thirty seconds with *I will clean my claws on your corpse!* or *Permission to attack, sir?* Some of the wingmen can be so persistent that you end up having a permanently-obscured screen unless you reduce the amount of time that each message gets shown on-screen. You do that by pressing the **M** key three times; then the message duration is set to its minimum, and you'll see a message *Message duration set to 1*. Get rid of the video image of the person sending the message by pressing **V**; you'll see *video images suppressed*.

I covered missiles in Chapter 3, but here's a quick overview. First, missiles are either unguided ("dumb fire") or guided. Guided missiles use one of three guidance systems: heat seeking, image recognition, and friend-or-foe identification. Heat-seeking missiles lock onto the heat from the exhaust of a ship's ion engine. Image-recognition missiles "memorize" what a ship looks like, and then follow it by sight. Friend or foe missiles just attack the nearest object that isn't broadcasting standard ConFed "friendly" messages.

Heat seekers are probably the most effective guided missile, as they lock onto the most vulnerable part of a ship—its aft end, where the shield and armor values are lowest. They take a few seconds to lock, and you'll know that they've locked by a little chime and a "target locked" message on the screen.

Image-recognition missiles also take a second or two to lock. You don't have to lock your targeting computer in order to get a missile lock—the computer will automatically lock the selected missile to whatever seems handy.

Friend-or-foe missiles just target the nearest enemy ship and chase that. They're not that effective simply because you can't tell them where to go; they tell themselves where to go.

You can read more about missiles in Chapter 3, but here are two main pieces of advice for the new missile-user. First, missiles are overrated and largely unnecessary. You do not need them to destroy capital ships, not even the big ones like the Kilrathi military HQ or the Sivar in Wing Commander I/Secret Missions 1. I've destroyed the Sivar with just lasers.



Missiles take time to lock, precious time that you're probably not spending firing gunshots at the enemy. Once a missile does hit a Kilrathi ship, it generally doesn't do all that much damage anyway. The second piece of advice is: If you've fired a missile, either stop firing your guns for a while, or swing in another direction and fire. Otherwise, you can destroy your own missile.

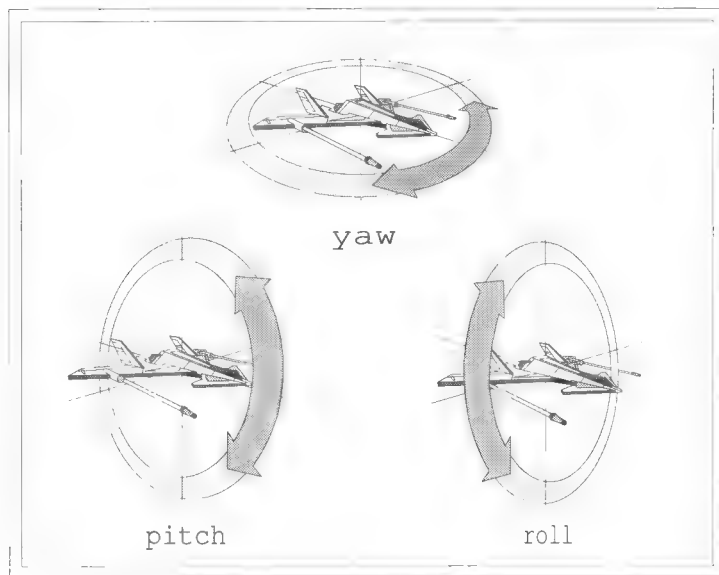
If you're finding that missiles just aren't doing anything for you, then you might think about using the missile camera to find out just what does happen when you fire a missile. Press F8 at some time in the mission, and you'll see the message *Missile camera enabled*. Then, from that point on in the mission, when you launch a missile, your point of view will shift to follow the missile. You can then find out why your missiles aren't hitting the targets—perhaps they're being distracted by chaff, or being shot down by gunfire or flak, or perhaps they *are* hitting the target, but the target's got tons of shielding. While you're following the missile, by the way, you're not flying your fighter, which can be dangerous, and for that reason, you obviously should not make a habit of enabling the

missile camera all the time.

If, by the way, you want to shift back to the cockpit before the missile is finished flying, just press F1 and your missile view will end, at least until you launch another missile. You can press F8 at any time to disable the missile camera.

Once you've got the basics of flying straight and narrow down, get some practice with rolls and loops; learn roll, pitch, and yaw, as you see here.

There's really nothing to any of these maneuvers—you roll by holding down either the > key or the < key while still thrusting and firing, and you loop by pulling back

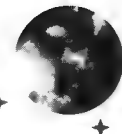


the stick and pitching until you're pointed back where you used to be pointed. What's the value of a roll or a loop? It confuses the enemy. The Kilrathi find it much easier to lock onto an enemy that's flying straight and level than they do with one that's twisting and turning. I once was trying to limp home in a Raptor with pretty battered shields, no armor, and no afterburners. Three Krants were on my tail, and if I could just keep them busy trying to figure out what I was doing while I was making my way back to the *Tiger's Claw*, I'd be able to live to brag about it in the Lounge. They had the firepower, and they had the speed—but I survived. I did it by zigzagging, looping, and rolling, but always working my way closer back to the carrier. Now and then, I'd turn and fire at a Krant. Basically, I avoided straight lines. It took 20 minutes of real-time flying to get the job done, but I made it home.

USING THE NAV SCAN SCREEN

Usually, you'll just follow a course as laid out by the Tactical Ops staff, moving from nav point to nav point. But sometimes you'll want to change the order in which you visit nav points, or occasionally you'll want to skip a nav point altogether. To do those things, you'll have to master the navigational computer's (navcomp's) Nav Scan screen. You view the Nav Scan by pressing **N** once if the navcomp is already activated on the VDU, or twice if the targeting computer is activated on the VDU. You'll see a screen like the one shown here.





The Nav Scan screen shows several things.

- **Location / mission number:** Each Wing Commander game (Wing Commander I, Secret Missions 1, Secret Missions 2, etc.) takes place in a particular sector—the first game is in Vega, the first Secret Mission is in Deneb, the second Secret Mission is in the Antares sector. Within a sector, there are star systems, and there's between two and four missions in each star system. This screen shows that in the Enigma sector, in the Ghorah Khar system, that this is mission C, the third mission of this series.
- **Mission type:** Mission types are Strike, Escort, Patrol, Defend, and Rendezvous. The type of mission usually gives you a clue to what you've actually got to do in order to complete the mission, from the game's point of view. For example, there are some missions where you come up against some really big opposition, making people think that the mission is really tough. In actuality, the mission may be a Patrol mission, and only requires that you touch the nav points and get home in one piece in order to "win" and continue on the winning game track. This is not a hard and fast rule, but, in general, all you need do to satisfy Patrol missions is to hit the nav points. Rendezvous and Escort missions both require you to defend a ship as it moves either from your base ship (the *Concordia*, the *Tiger's Claw*, or the like) to some other point (Escort) or from some other point to the base ship (Rendezvous). Strike missions require going to a target and destroying the target, and Defend missions require that you go to a friendly ship and destroy all nearby enemy ships. The difference between a Rendezvous mission and a Defend mission is that in both cases, you travel out to meet a friendly ship, and you destroy the enemies in the vicinity of the friendly ship. Once you finish a Defend mission, you just go back to the *Tiger's Claw* alone; once you finish a Rendezvous mission, you'll travel back to the Claw with the friendly ship. This isn't, again, a 100-percent reliable set of descriptions of mission types. For example, there's the third Gimle mission—where you encounter 9 Dralhti, including the ace Dakhath—bills itself as a Patrol mission, but if you

just touch the nav point and return, then you've failed in the mission. Similarly, Dakota 2, the near-impossible Ralari defense mission, is called a "Defend," yet the Ralari accompanies you back to the *Tiger's Claw*.

- **Notes** should be self-explanatory. The Notes is sometimes where you'll see the information that indicates that you should ignore the fact that something is a, say, Patrol mission, but that you should destroy something.

Within the map, you'll see four things: an area labeled *CALLSIGN*, one labeled *Nav Point*, one labeled *Task Force*, and one labeled *Olympus*. *CALLSIGN* is the place where your ship is currently located. You won't see *CALLSIGN*; you'll see whatever your call sign is, like "Comet," "Mad Dog," "Frogstar," or whatever you've chosen. The other labeled items are nav points. This shows that you're currently set to autonav to the nav point just labeled *Nav Point*. Notice that the pointer arrow is located there. To tell the navcomp to autonav you to another nav point, just move your joystick over to the other point, or click the mouse pointer on the other point, or press the **N** key to make the cursor jump from point to point until you reach the desired point, then press the Enter key. You'll then be back in the cockpit view and if you press **A**, you'll autonav to the point that you selected.

If, on the other hand, you just wanted to look at the Nav Scan, and don't want to alter your autonav destination, then just press the Esc key to return to the cockpit view.

Time stops for the game while you're in the Nav Scan. You can stay in Nav Scan as long as you like, and nothing will change in the outside world.

USING THE WING COMMANDER II RECORDER

The Wing Commander II games all feature a "playback" option that allows you to review what you've just done. You just press **R** for the replay. Unfortunately, you can only view a replay once, and you only see a replay back to the last time that you dropped out of autonav. The bottom



line is that the recorder isn't of much use in Wing Commander, and it's a shame—the VCR feature of games like Red Baron are immensely useful.

DEALING WITH WINGMEN

Once you've gotten down your flying and shooting, then you're ready to tackle the next part of playing the game—dealing with wingmen.

You'll find that wingmen are mainly a pain in the neck. They neither fly nor fight as well as you probably do, and they're constantly squawking at you over the intercom to come help them, or let them attack, or some such.

As you've read in the Wing Commander documentation, you communicate with your wingman with your comm unit, which you activate by pressing **C**. If there's more than one object that you might have to talk to, such as if you're flying with your wingman near your base ship (the *Tiger's Claw*, the *Concordia*, or whatever), then you'll have to choose which object should receive the message. Then you'll see an array of possible messages like "break and attack," "maintain radio silence," and the like. You will not be able to communicate with ships that you're escorting, in general.

The best that you can do with wingmen in Wing Commander I is to try to keep them alive. Most of them will return to the base if you tell them to, although some of them may take a while to do it. For example, if you tell Doomsday to return to base, then he'll say, "Affirmative, sir," and he'll slowly start making his way back to base. If you autonav before his ship disappears from your radar, then he'll follow you anyway. Just stop outside of the *Tiger's Claw* and tell your wingman to return to base. If he or she responds affirmatively, then just wait for the wingman's ship to disappear from your screen, then start on your mission.

Does it matter whether you keep your wingman alive or not? No, actually; keeping the wingmen alive has almost nothing to do with winning or losing the Wing Commander games. But it's depressing to see an empty chair in the Lounge in the Wing Commander I games representing a dead pilot. In Wing Commander II, your wingman can't die;

they always manage to eject. (You can get tractor-beam practice rescuing them if you like.) Some wingmen will refuse to return to base until you've hit your first nav point.

For those wingmen that refuse to go home, you may as well use them like a slightly smart missile. Just turn 'em loose on the enemy with a *break and attack* or *attack my target* command, and who knows? Once in a while, they're actually useful.

Hobbes, Stingray, Hunter, Iceman, and Maniac are so bloodthirsty that they'll actually damage you as they try to destroy enemy ships; see the section *Friendly Fire* later in the chapter.

Angel is so by-the-book that she'll do stupid things in order to remain in regulation fighter formation. Since she flies in a fixed location relative to you, you can cause her (accidentally) to fly into objects if your flight path parallels those objects. When flying with Angel, give a wide berth to any ships that you're escorting, or she may ram them. (I guess she's too busy staring with affection at your character to notice that she's going to hit something.) You'll also meet wingmen who show the opposite behavior, like Hunter or Maniac. If you order them to do something, they may or may not follow orders.

The bottom line is that wingmen can be a pain; but they're really not the burden that they appear to be in the first place, as you really don't have to protect them, and keeping them alive is not actually a criterion for winning in Wing Commander. Suppress the video and shorten the message duration, as you read a few pages back, and their chatter won't get too much in the way of your dogfighting.

FLYING THROUGH ASTEROIDS

Asteroids are a major pain in Wing Commander. Blame it on Atari—their circa 1979 *Star Raiders* game was the prototype of all games that followed it, including Wing Commander, and part of *Star Raiders* involved navigating through hyperspace around asteroids. As a result, all self-respecting bang-bang-shoot-'em-up games have to subject their players to asteroid fields.

The Wing Commander documentation for the games is basically right: Keep the speed below 250 kps and fly carefully. Keep half an eye on the



navigation cross, and the rest of your attention on the rocks, and you'll usually get through okay.

Sometimes, however, the game just seems to pop a rock up in front of you, without any warning. That can happen if you've just dipped the nose, and there was an asteroid just below the plane of your flight path. So be careful about changing altitude. The other thing to be careful about is nav points inside asteroid fields. Once you reach the nav point, the navigational cross moves, and so you swing the ship around to move to the new nav point. As you are then changing your direction of flight, a quick change could cause you to run into a rock. Suggestion: Slow down before making a course change.

There are two other ways to handle asteroids, both a little goofy—but they work, sometimes. The first is to just fire on incoming asteroids with your guns. Mass drivers seem to be the most effective gun for destroying asteroids.

You won't believe the second method, but it works. There's an odd bug in the games that often allows you to make it through the asteroids on afterburners. Try it sometime; just line up the navigational cross and light up the afterburners. Don't move the joystick; just lean on the afterburner key (Tab). You'll actually pass through the rocks! Unfortunately, however, this doesn't always work. As you blast through the asteroid field, you'll see the occasional asteroid that kind of sidles in at you slowly from the left or the right; for some reason, those get you. If you see an asteroid coming at you slowly while you're on the afterburners, then slow down and get out of the rock's way.

Again, this doesn't always work. But it works sometimes, and it's worth trying in a pinch, in most of the games.

Using afterburners to pass through asteroids does not work in *Privateer*; the ships in that game cannot afterburner through asteroid fields. That's important particularly because the Rygannon mapping missions late in the game require you to fight Kilrathi ships on your way to nearly every jump point, and unfortunately most of those jump points are in asteroid fields. ("Unfortunately" because if they weren't in asteroid fields, then you could just afterburner past the Kilrathi ships, avoiding an unnecessary fight as you hyperjump out of the range of their guns.) When

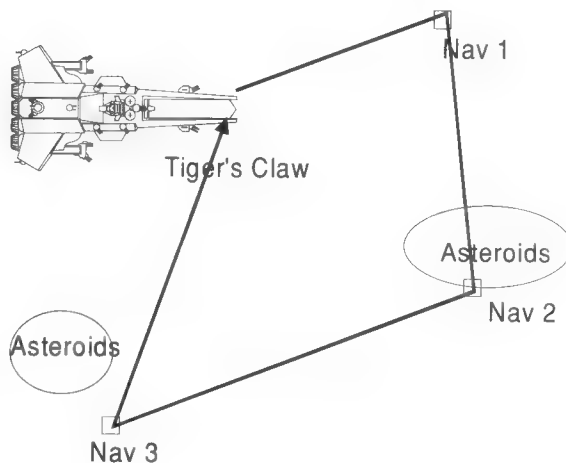
you find yourself in an asteroid field, and you are trying to get to the jump point with three Gothri on your tail, try this. Your speed should be set around 250 kps, as always, but use the afterburners, albeit sparingly.

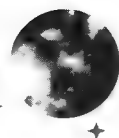
If you see an opening, then touch the afterburners briefly to rush through the opening, getting closer to the jump point. The Kilrathi ships will pursue you, certainly, and you won't be able to completely avoid them like you could if you could just run away with the afterburners, but you'll give them less chances to take potshots at you. You'll also make their lives difficult in that they're pursuing you through the rocks, so the enemy ships are speed-constrained as well. If the enemy gets too eager and tries to chase you at breakneck speed through the asteroid field, then there's a good chance that he'll be destroyed by an asteroid, as is shown here.



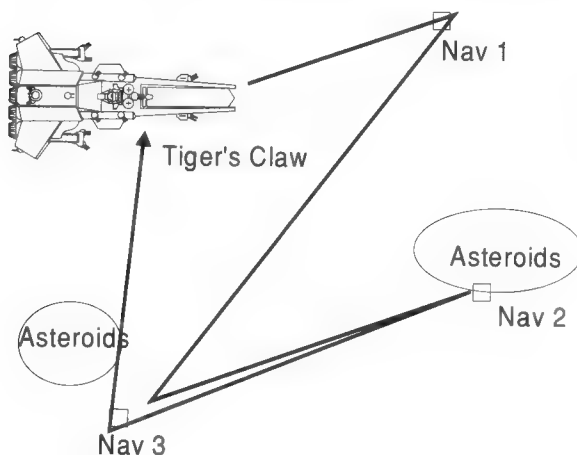
AVOIDING ASTEROIDS

All things considered, I'd rather avoid asteroids. You often can avoid them, with some work. Here's how. Suppose you're going to fly the first Wing Commander I mission, Enyo Alpha, with a navigation map like the one you see here.





If you just get to a nav point, press **A** to autonav to the next point (or steer the ship in that direction, if you can't autonav), and you'll follow a path like the one shown



above. You have to fly through a pile of asteroids to get to nav 2. Now consider an alternative route, as you see here.

You fly this in this way. First, you leave the *Tiger's Claw*, and autonav to nav 1. Then you re-program your navigation computer to next autonav you to nav 3, not nav 2. You do that by invoking the nav computer's map

mode (press **N** twice if you've got the targeting computer engaged, once otherwise), which will show you a map of your mission route. Just position your joystick or mouse over nav 3 and press the "fire" button on the joystick, or click button 1 on the mouse. Then press Enter to return to the cockpit, and press **A** to autonav to nav point 3.

Now, you do not want to go all the way to nav 3, because if you did, then you wouldn't be fulfilling your mission; some missions actually do not require you to kill any of the enemy, but instead to hit all of your nav points, and in order. You'll drop out of autonav at about 12,000 km away from nav 3 if there are enemy present, or about 1,500 km away otherwise. Again, don't go all the way to nav 3; just get back into the map mode of the navigation computer, and tell it now that you want to go to nav 2. Back to cockpit mode, autonav, and you'll end up close to nav 2. You'll have to fly through some asteroids, sure, but it's a lot easier going nav 1-near 3-2-3-home than it is going nav 1-2-3-home.

You will not always be able to reroute yourself in order to avoid asteroids; some nav points are in the exact dead center of an asteroid field. But the game will let you "avoid the 'roids" in more than half the missions.

FLYING THROUGH MINEFIELDS

Flying through mines is a lot like flying through asteroid fields. Avoid the minefields if you can (where does the Empire of Kilrah get the credits to mine entire areas of space larger than planets, one wonders), and if you must fly through them, then avoid the mines. Each mine does about the same amount of damage as a pair of laser bolts. It's not much, but if your shields are already down before you enter a minefield, and if you don't pay attention to avoiding the mines while you're in the minefield, then the mines could conceivably knock down your armor and even damage a subsystem. You have to deliberately try to kill yourself in a minefield, however.

There is one thing about minefields that is different from asteroid fields. Do not reduce your speed; fly through minefields at the highest possible speed that you can manage. The mines are magnetic, and thus are drawn to the durasteel armor on your ship. Move too slowly, and they can clump around you. Notice that the mines do not float in all different directions, like the asteroids do; they pretty much drift slowly in your direction, making avoiding them easier. (A tough thing about asteroids is that they can come at you quickly from any direction—it's actually possible for an asteroid to come up behind you and damage your ship from the rear!) So fly as fast as you can through the mines.

DOCKING WITH THE *TIGER'S CLAW*

Once you've finished your mission, you return home to receive the cheers or the jeers. But before you do that, you've got to dock with the *Tiger's Claw*, at least in the Wing Commander I games. That can be a little tricky. You really don't want to fight and win a tough mission, only to kill yourself crashing against the hull of the *Tiger's Claw*.

The steps to docking with the *Tiger's Claw* are: First, hail the *Claw* and request landing. Then position yourself right in the front of the *Tiger's Claw* and move towards the carrier. Once you are at a distance of about 1650 km from the carrier, the landing sequence will begin.

In a little more detail: First, don't rush the docking if you're not comfortable. Get close enough to the *Claw* that you can communicate with it (about 7000 km), then stop your ship by pressing the Backspace key.



Raise the *Claw* on your comm unit and request landing. You should get the order to land. If you don't, then it's probably because there are enemy ships attacking the carrier.

Then move around to the front of the carrier. You shouldn't be below it; a bit above it is good. If the *Tiger's Claw* looks a bit lopsided, then just roll with the > or < keys to put it into an up-and-down orientation from your ship's point of view. Then set your speed to about 150 kps, and move towards the *Claw*. If you get to 1500 km and the game still hasn't activated the landing sequence, then break off and try it again; if it doesn't grab you by 1500 km, then it isn't going to, and you're going to crash against the hull of the *Tiger's Claw*.

DOCKING IN WING COMMANDER II AND PRIVATEER

Docking in Wing Commander II and Privateer is much easier. In Wing Commander II, you need only get within comm range, request landing, get confirmation, and then get within 1800 km of the ship that you're trying to dock on; you needn't worry about whether it's the back or the front. In Privateer, you just fly right at the object that you're landing on, and the landing happens automatically.

RUNNING AWAY

This will be anathema to True Warriors, but sometimes it's best to just run away. Not all missions require that you destroy things; some require that you preserve things, as in the common defense-type missions. Rather than take an enemy on, just outrun it if possible.

This is most common in Privateer. There are pirates and Retros everywhere, and the random Kilrathi can be found on the border. If these are not hostiles that you're being paid to destroy, then just pass them by; no one but you is going to pay for your ship repairs and replacement missiles, and if you're not making money on this kill, then just pass it by.

The "run away!" advice applies in some cases in the other games as well. There are several Wing Commander I/II scenarios where you're supposed to fly by a large group of bogies, and not to stop and engage them.

My experience with the Secret Missions 1 mission where you've got to escort the captured Dralthi back to the *Tiger's Claw* is that the only way to get the Dralthi back in one piece is to run. Since you're escorting a very thinly-shielded ship, only superhuman piloting could protect the captured Dralthi from all the firepower that the cats throw at it.

DOGFIGHTING TIPS

Most of the action in Wing Commander comes from dogfighting, the hand-to-hand (so to speak) conflict of fighter spaceship against fighter spaceship. You know the basics; here are some tips that you may find useful when facing impossible odds, such as trying to take on five Gothri with just a Ferret. (No, it never happens in the game, but try it in Academy—it's challenging!)

APPROACHING A SWARM OF ENEMIES

You drop out of autonav and see four Grikath in the distance, closing fast. What's the best way to begin attacking a wing of enemy fighters? If you fly right into their midst, they'll chew you up. So what to do?

When facing a bunch of enemy fighters, bear in mind that you're probably a good enough pilot to be able to take any one of them. The problem is their numbers, so your top priority should be to even the odds a bit. There are several ways to do that.

Send In Your Wingman First

Okay, sending your wingman in first is a sleazy thing to do, but it works sometimes. Loiter out 15,000 clicks away from the action and tell your wingman to "break and attack." Let him or her draw the fire of a couple of the fighters; that'll even the odds so that you've only got to take on two or three enemies.

Retreat and Taunt the Enemy

In some missions, the enemy see you and all take off in your direction. But sometimes—usually when they're escorting an enemy capital ship—the enemy pays no attention to you until you draw attention to



yourself. That means that in order to engage those Sarthas guarding that Fralthra, you've got to fly near the Fralthra, which means that not only do the Sarthas fire at you, you've also got to take the Fralthra's flak guns!

In this case, fly just close enough to target an enemy fighter. Lock it with your targeting computer. Then taunt the enemy. Use your communications unit to send message number 3. No matter what game you're playing, message number 3 drives the Kilrathi wild. Send the message a number of times, and you'll finally get him mad enough to break out of escort formation and run the 12,000 klicks out to engage you. His buddies will still be guarding the capital ship, so it's just you and him...just the way you like it. Be careful of missiles—angry Kilrathi seem to like launching missiles. Draw away each fighter, one by one, and you can thin out an escort wing to nothing. As you've taken on each ship one-to-one, your shields are strong, and you're ready to take on the capital ship.

Blitzkrieg the Enemy

Your fusion reactor isn't powerful enough to provide enough energy to let most ships run their guns continuously. As a result, gun energy comes from an energy-storage device called a *gun capacitor*. Your fusion reactor charges it up, and you discharge it when you fire the guns.

Now, when that capacitor's full, and you've got all your guns engaged, then the ships with four or more guns (like the Raptor, Rapier, Sabre, and Morningstar) are downright devastating. Three or four rapid-fire blasts of full gun power can destroy most enemy ships. For example, try charging up the Raptor's capacitors to full power, then engage a Salthi and fire both mass drivers and neutron guns. If the Salthi is stupid enough to come straight at you (which, thankfully, they often are), then you'll probably destroy it before you empty your capacitors.

This suggests a strategy for handling groups of enemies. Charge your capacitors to full, engage all guns, and afterburner in, targeting one single ship for destruction. If you fire true, then by the time your capacitor's empty, the enemy is history. You run away and recharge, then flash back in and take out another bad guy. The major down-side of this strategy is that it's hard on the afterburner fuel, but other than that, it works well.

GETTING SHIPS THAT RUN AWAY

Sometimes you'll rout an enemy, doing it so much damage that it runs away. If you're just interested in getting rid of the enemy ship, then that's all there is to it. But if you're looking to rack up more kills (and what pilot worth her salt isn't?), then you'll want to give chase.

Don't.

The logical thing to do when a Sartha runs away is to light up the afterburners and chase it. You really needn't do that, as it's a waste of afterburner fuel. Instead, set your navcomp to take you back towards the previous nav point, and autonav there. Then immediately reset the navcomp to take you back to the nav point where you met the ship that ran. When you drop out of autonav, the ship will be back. (Unfortunately, it will be a brand-new, fresh ship without any damage.)

Here's an example. Suppose you launch from the *Concordia* and autonav to nav point 1. You drop out of autonav only to find yourself facing four Grikaths. You dispatch three of the Grikaths, and the fourth, damaged and out of missiles, runs away. Reset the nav computer to take you back to the *Concordia*, and activate the autopilot with the **A** key. (Autopilot won't work until the Grikath has run out of targeting range, about 17,000 km.) When you appear near the *Concordia*, reset the nav computer to nav 1, and go back to autopilot. When you reappear near nav 1, the enemy ship will be there waiting for you.

There's another way to get an enemy ship back, although it doesn't always work. You can taunt the enemy with taunt number three, and they'll at least respond ("I will clean my claws on your corpse," "Death to all humans," "Time to die, human!"), and sometimes they'll turn around and face Death like a man...I mean, like a lion.

FRIENDLY FIRE

One time I was slugging it out with a Grikath, on a mission with Hobbes. I was taking fire from my rear, but I was close to killing the Grik, and so I figured, "I can take it long enough to finish this guy off." Then I noticed that the shots that were just missing me were particle beams. There are no Kilrathi ships with particle beams! I turned around, and sure enough, that idiot Hobbes was trying to destroy the Grikath, just as



I was! (He had overlooked the fact that my ship was sitting between his guns and the Grikath.)

Since then, I've noticed that certain wingmen (Hunter, Maniac, and Hobbes in particular) are downright dangerous when they're firing on an enemy. My advice is to be aware of where your wingman is, and if he's decided to take on the same ship as you, then either go find another opponent, or tell the wingman to "form on my wing"—that tells him to break off the engagement.

ANGLES OF ATTACK

When attacking an enemy, where would you like to be? The best possible location for destroying most ships is for you to hang on their tail, where the shielding is at its lowest. Keep firing until you destroy the target. If the ship moves, then just afterburner around so that you can stay behind it.

You can't always get around behind an enemy immediately, however, so what should you do until you can hang on the bad guy's tail? A frontal attack will often work. Just make sure that you've enabled all of your forward guns, and that your gun capacitor is charged to the top, then fly right at the first ship in the wing, firing continuously. He'll fire also, but you'll generally do more damage to him than he'll do to you. Result: The first enemy is dead, and your shields are weakened, but not destroyed. You use the afterburners to run away for a few moments to recharge your shields and gun capacitors, then come back and do it again.

Now, this doesn't always work. For example, suppose you're flying a Hornet against a wing of Dralhti Mark IIs. The Mark IIs are equipped with mass driver guns, which are far more devastating than the measly two lasers that the Hornet carries. The better approach is usually to squeeze off a few frontal bursts, then use the afterburner slide to come around and follow-up with a front/side attack—the slide is described below.

Wing Commander II has a fair number of enemy ships with powerful forward guns. It also has some ships with rear guns, making the earlier advice to hang on the enemy's tail obsolete. In both cases, just swerve and strike. Fly straight at a fighter until you see gun shots coming toward



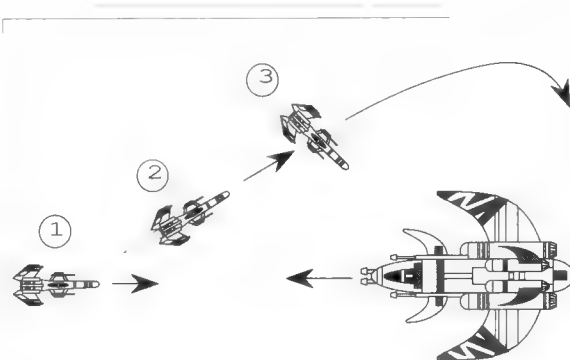
you. Then turn a bit to the right and apply afterburners to get out of the way of the gun blast. The fighter is now probably pointed at where you used to be, so you just swing the nose around and blast it broadsides! You see how to do this *afterburner slide* in the illustration here.

At point 1, you're facing the enemy head-on. Empty your gun capacitor once you're in gun range, and keep firing until you see his gun bursts coming at you.

Once his bursts get close to you, go to point 2; turn

about 30 degrees to the side, and light up the afterburners for about a second. Then you'll be at point 3. Still at cruising speed—afterburners are off—swivel around and aim at the enemy ship, and squeeze off another burst or two, depending on how much juice you've got left in the capacitors. Now, if it's possible, you can afterburner around behind him and blast him from the rear—the weakest part of the ship. (Obviously, don't attack a ship with a rear turret from the rear, and certainly not at close range.)

This afterburner-slide technique takes a little longer, and it costs some afterburner fuel, but it's the only way to take on bigger, stronger fighters. For an example, imagine a Ferret up against four Jalkehi. The Jalkehi are heavy fighters with rear neutron guns and punishing forward particle beams. Your poor Ferret, with the weak shields, can't afford to be on the business end of either one of those guns. So you run around and take potshots at the side of the slower-moving Jalkehis. As always, lock a particular ship and wear it down until it's dead, rather than expending a lot of energy doing light damage to a lot of fighters all at once.





RECHARGE SHIELDS BETWEEN ENGAGEMENTS

When you've finished eliminating an enemy, your shields are probably attenuated a bit, and your gun capacitor may be only partially charged. Unless you're in a big hurry (as you would be in a defense mission), then take a few seconds' break to charge the shields and the capacitor to maximum.

RAMMING ENEMIES

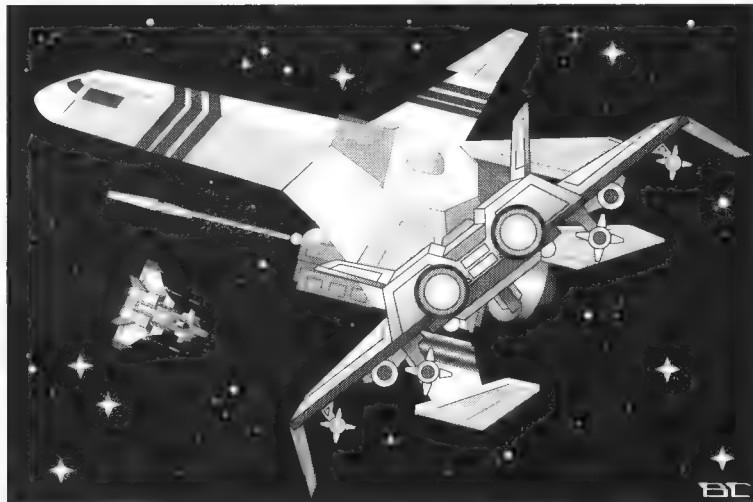
Your guns and missiles aren't your only weapons. You can also ram your enemy with your ship, as you can see in the illustration here. The price you pay is that the force of ramming an enemy will damage your shields, and if you rammed someone really hard, or if the enemy ship was coming really quickly, then you may lose armor, and then subsystems. If you ram something hard enough to knock down your shields

and penetrate your armor, then the subsystem that usually goes first is the acceleration absorbers. Once the acceleration absorbers go, by the way, then you'll probably die if you ram anything else.

Ramming is a fast way to destroy an enemy (assuming that it doesn't destroy you as well). When you're going to ram, remember that the enemy's shields are weakest at the tail, and your shields are

strongest at the nose. Get up behind an enemy ship, weaken its shields with your guns, and then light up the afterburners just a bit, and smash 'em from behind.

Ramming is the way that you'll win the dread Kurasawa 2 "Ralari rescue" mission—see its special write-up in Chapter 7.



USING THE TURRETS

Three ships in Wing Commander have rear and, sometimes, side turrets: The Sabre and the Crossbow have rear turrets, and the Broadsword has rear and side turrets. The reasons why the Confederation put turrets on ships are twofold: First, they allow the pilot to defend a ship while it's making a bombing run on a capital ship, as a ship on a bombing run cannot change direction because doing that would make the ship lose the torpedo lock. The idea is that you can start your torpedo run, and then while your ship is moving towards the capital ship, you can switch your view to the rear and side turrets to defend yourself against enemy fighters. Here you see me in a Broadsword turret destroying a Sartha.

Now, that's what the Origin documentation claims; but it's a bogus claim, because no one in his right mind would attack a capital ship before destroying its fighter escort. The second, and real reason for turrets is speed and maneuverability—

or, rather, the lack of speed and maneuverability in the Crossbow and Broadwords. Suppose a pack of Drakhri attack a Broadsword. The Broadsword turns so slowly that a good Drakhri pilot can circle a Broadsword faster than a Broadsword can turn; as a result, it becomes impossible for you to get a single shot at a Drakhri that's taking potshots at you. By the time you've turned to get it in your sights, it's flown around behind your ship.

That's what the turrets are for. The turrets are equipped with dual neutron guns, a pretty powerful deterrent against some fighter hanging on your tail and destroying you. The only problem with neutron guns is that they use a lot of power, and they'll drain the gun capacitor very quickly. Squeeze off a burst, then wait a second, then squeeze off another burst, never letting the capacitor drop below a 25 percent charge. The





capacitor charges very slowly if you've drained it completely, and much faster if you leave a bit of power.

When you're in a Broadsword or a Crossbow, and you're beset by fast fighters, don't spend a lot of time trying to swing the nose around and bring the forward guns to bear on your attackers; as I just said, they'll chew you to pieces while you chase your tail. Instead, blast at them with your tail guns for a while. After a bit, they'll get the message that you've got an active tail gunner, and they'll move to the front. Then you've got them in the sights of your more powerful forward guns. As an added bonus, while you're hitting them from the rear, your forward shield is recharging, and vice versa when you're hitting them from your forward guns.

There is no use for the rear turret on the Sabre, save for the tractor beam. Don't defend yourself from the rear turret; instead, when something's attacking you from the rear, use the Sabre's superior turning abilities to turn and face the opponent, and then turn your mass-driver/particle-beam combination full force at your attacker.

The rear turrets have ITTS, despite what the game's documentation claims.

DOGFIGHTING IN ASTEROID FIELDS

The first time you encounter unfriendlies in an asteroid field, your first reaction may be, "Uh-oh. Rocks and bad guys? I'm dead." Not so. There are two keys to handling dogfights in asteroid fields. First, the game gets lenient when you're fighting in the rocks; the asteroids seem to move farther apart, and they don't seem to "target" you any more. This isn't to say that you needn't fly carefully in an asteroid field when there are enemy ships around; on the contrary, it's still quite possible to wrap your ship around a bit of floating geology—it's just less likely.

Second, remember that the rocks don't have any loyalty, and enemy ships smash against them just as easily as does your ship. Just as you've got to fly more carefully, so does your opponent. And if your opponent doesn't fly as well as you do, then there's a chance that you can use the asteroids to your advantage. Just zigzag in and around the rocks, and you'll probably be able to destroy an enemy or two.

When fighting in and around asteroids, you can usually move up to maximum speed safely, as the asteroids are less troublesome when there are enemy ships around. Then fire right at incoming ships, which will force them to try to swerve to avoid you—perhaps right into an asteroid. Use guided missiles, or even dumb-fires; again, anything that forces an enemy to twist this way and that is good. As your enemy will also be using missiles, keep the chaff pods ready when you're not firing missiles.

Just for fun, practice this with Wing Commander Academy. Set up an asteroid field with five Grikath. Fly a Broadsword, and you can survive every time with these tactics.

DEFENDING OTHER SHIPS

These are the hardest missions, bar none. You've got to defend other ships when you run Defend, Escort, and Rendezvous missions, and that's no fun. You'll fly a lot of missions with scenes like the one shown here.

Basically all defense-oriented missions put you in a tough spot; not only must you keep yourself alive, you've also got to keep a ship alive that generally lacks afterburners and is usually outnumbered.

Given those odds, what can you do to keep those Clydesdales, Exeters, Gilgameshes, Free Traders, Ventures, Draymen, and the others in one piece?



- Don't ram the friendly capital ship. When you're whizzing around a friendly capital ship in pursuit of some enemy fighter ship, it's easy to lose track of exactly how close you are to the capital ship, and so to run into that capital ship. Doing that is



double trouble because it not only damages you, it damages the capital ship as well—you're doing the enemy's work.

- Work quickly. Use fast-killing techniques that you wouldn't ordinarily use, like ramming enemy fighters, or using missiles.
- Stay on the attacking ships, and ignore the ones that have decided to run away. Usually, some enemy ships may just be in the area, and others are actually doing the attacking. It's not unusual for a couple of ships to be left behind to distract you, while a couple of ships pound on the ship you're supposed to be defending. Focus on the ships that are firing on your friendly capital ship.
- If you can't make a quick kill, break off. Don't chase a Salthi to finish killing it; if you've scared it off, then that's all you need to accomplish your mission. Your goal is to preserve the capital ship, not to rack up kills. If you follow an enemy ship away from the capital ship, then you leave the capital ship undefended.
- Interpose yourself between the attackers and the defended ship. Stay in their line of fire. Take the hits for a few seconds while your gun capacitor recharges, and then fire on the enemy until your capacitor is empty. That's usually enough to destroy the bandit.
- Taunt the enemy. When you're rushing to the aid of another ship, you can sometimes draw the fire of an enemy fighter by targeting it and then sending it the third message. That may anger it enough to get it running towards you as you run towards the capital ship that you're supposed to be defending. You can, with your fully charged guns, dispatch the enemy ship on your way in towards the capital ship, evening the odds a bit. Then taunt the next enemy ship.
- Clear the field before your ship appears. There are a number of scenarios where there are a number of enemy ships hanging around the area where your capital ship is about to jump into. Game tip: Your capital ship will generally not jump in until you've touched the nav point, so just take your time and kill off the enemy fighters before touching the nav point.

- Don't leave until the ship has jumped. Some of the Wing Commander missions allow you to autonav away from the capital ship that you're supposed to be guarding. If you do that, then you'll get the report later that the ship was destroyed. If your charge is supposed to jump out at nav 2, then wait at nav 2 until you see it jump.
- Give the capital ship a wide berth if you're flying with Angel. As mentioned earlier in this chapter (see *Dealing with Wingmen*), Angel's not too smart about flying in formation, and so can sometimes crash into ships that you're supposed to be escorting.
- Figure out which ships are tough, and don't get too rushed trying to save them. The *Tiger's Claw*, the *Concordia*, Olympus base, Paladin's *Free Trader*, and Exeters are pretty thick-skinned. This is not to say that you shouldn't worry about them, but don't get rushed and make a mistake. I steadfastly believe, however, that it's impossible to kill the *Bonnie Heather*. I've parked off its bow and watched ships slam it, and it doesn't die. If I kill it, then the game crashes.

There's no sure-fire way to save capital ships, but these guidelines will surely help your defensive missions.

ATTACKING CAPITAL SHIPS AND BASES

Over a dozen missions in the Wing Commander universe involve attacking capital ships or fixed bases. Attacking capital ships is a point where the Wing Commander I games differ from the Wing Commander II games. In Wing Commander I, capital ships and bases were just bigger ships; all you needed to do to destroy them was to just fire more shots at them. In Wing Commander II, however, most capital ships have a special kind of shield called a phase shield that can only be destroyed by a special kind of missile called a torpedo. Torpedoes are a pain to use; read Chapter 3 to learn the basics of using them.



ATTACKING A CAPITAL SHIP IN WING COMMANDER I

Capital ships in Wing Commander I are mainly bluff. They look big and bad, but they're actually slow, well-armored, and poorly defended.

Basically, all you've got to do to destroy a capital ship in the first three games is:

- 1** Destroy its fighter escort.
- 2** Position yourself about 2500 km behind the capital ship, aiming right at its exhaust pipes.
- 3** Fire continuously at the rear of the capital ship until it explodes.

The capital ship can move a bit, so you'll probably have to do some adjusting of your position, but that's the basic approach. Capital ships do have a few missiles, and they have flak guns, so they can inflict some damage on you, but the flak guns are more flashes than destruction, and you can withstand a fair amount of flak before your shields get dangerously low.

When your shields do drop down around level 10, turn tail and afterburner out of there. There's really no reason to use missiles, as your guns will work well against capital ships. I've completed every Strike mission against capital ships with guns—missiles are not needed, and are mainly of use when you're in a big hurry, such as in a defense mission.

ATTACKING A CAPITAL SHIP IN WING COMMANDER II

Two capital ships in Wing Commander II work like the old Wing Commander I capital ships—the Dorkathi and the Kamekh. They're just big, slow ships that you just wear down with your guns until they're eliminated.

Most capital ships in Wing Commander II, however, use a kind of shield that is impervious to all guns and almost all missiles. These *phase shields*, as they're called, can be destroyed by a torpedo, a mace missile, or a leech missile. No amount of gunfire will knock down a phase shield. Here's how to use one of the "magic missiles" to stop a capital ship.

The mace missile is simple to use; it's just a dumb-fire missile with a mega-wallop. Just point it at the capital ship and fire. The tactical nuclear warhead will destroy anything. In *Special Operations 2*, for example, there's a mission to destroy a tough Mandarin base called Ayer's Rock. One mace missile destroys the Rock with no trouble whatsoever.

The leech missile (which only appears on the *Wraith* in *Wing Commander Academy*) is a guided missile (an image recognition type) that kills a phase shield for a brief period of time, about a minute, giving you the time to move in and destroy the ship with your guns and/or missiles.

The torpedo is usually what you have to use to destroy a phase shield, and more often than not, it's the Broadsword or the Crossbow that you're flying when you're attacking a capital ship. (Sabres also have torpedoes.) The relative slowness of the Broadsword or Crossbow makes launching torpedoes tough; so here's how to maximize the chances that you successfully zap a cap ship with torpedoes launched from a ship without afterburners.

First, you can't just launch torpedoes. First, you've got to select the torpedo from your weapons (use the **W** key to cycle through the weapons, and you'll see *torpedo* come up). Then you've got to target the capital ship with the targeting computer, and lock it. Unlike the heat-seeking or the image-recognition missiles, the torpedoes do not start zeroing in on the capital ship until you explicitly lock the targeting computer on the capital ship.

Once you've locked the targeting computer on the capital ship, you'll see the torpedo slowly lock itself onto the capital ship. The lock will take about 20 seconds. During those 20 seconds, you can't change the direction that your ship is facing in by very much. You can speed up or slow down without any trouble, but jerk the nose around, and you lose the lock, and you've got to start all over.

The game documentation indicates that you should point your fighter at the enemy capital ship, lock the target, and then just cruise at the enemy while your torpedo is locking. Once it locks, you just loose the torpedo, and your job is done.

It's not exactly like that.



For one thing, the capital ships of Wing Commander II have mildly nastier flak guns than the ships of the earlier games had. A slow, leisurely, 20–40 second approach to a hostile capital ship is downright dangerous.

Answer: The capital ships have flak guns whose maximum range is about 10,500 km. Your targeting computer, on the other hand, can target at up to about 11,500 km. Just position yourself outside of flak gun range, but inside target range, and turn off the thrusters. Just sit at that location, waiting for the torpedo to lock. Then, once the torpedo has locked, set your velocity to maximum, run in toward the capital ship, and launch the torpedo.

The next problem is when to loose the torpedo. The capital ship's flak guns can destroy a torpedo, so you can't just let it fly from 11,000 km away, as you sip Kilrathi brandy and enjoy the fireworks when the Fralthra explodes.

Answer: First, get used to the fact that you're going to lose a torpedo or two to the flak guns. Turn on the missile camera (press **F8** to toggle it off or on) so that you can see how the torpedoes do. Get within 3000 km of the capital ship before releasing the torpedo. Then launch the torpedo, and turn around fast. Your point of view will shift to the torpedo's missile camera, but the ship will still respond to your commands, and it's not that hard to make a 180 degree turn, blind—anything from a 90 degree turn to a 270 degree turn will do just fine. You just want to get away from that annoying flak gun so that you can get ready for another torpedo run. You put on the missile camera so you'll know whether or not your torpedo made it, or if it was blasted by flak.

Once you've planted a torpedo right on an enemy's hull, you may be dismayed to learn that you usually don't kill the enemy with just one torpedo—two, or sometimes three, are required.

That's not great news, but it's not the end of the world, either. What is important is that you should fly out beyond flak range, and recharge your shields. The Broadsword and the Crossbow recharge at a painfully slow rate, but if you don't take the time and let their shields regenerate all the way before making the next torpedo run, then the capital ship's

flak guns will make mincemeat out of you. Then repeat the torpedo process.

Final problem: Sometimes you'll be coming in for a torpedo run on a Fralthra. Everything's looking good, the torpedo's locked, and you're about 5000 klicks out, steaming towards your putative victim. Then a pair of light blue balls of energy zip out at you...and the next thing you know, you're seeing a screen that says, *You have died*. What happened?

What happened was the dread and annoying antimatter cannon. Antimatter bypasses the shields and directly attacks your armor and ship subsystems. You should never allow an antimatter hit to land on your ship, as some ships cannot stand one hit, and no ship I've ever flown has survived two antimatter hits. The best thing to do when you see that pair of antimatter shots is to just veer off. Sure, you lose the lock, but you can always come back; take that shot, and your ship will be jarred enough to break the lock anyway, and your ship's a lot weaker. Sometimes, the antimatter gets lucky and destroys the targeting computer, making torpedo launching impossible.

If you're tired of being shoved around by those big, mean Fralthras with their darn antimatter guns, then here's another approach. When you're making your torpedo run, don't come right at the Fralthra. Instead, point the nose of your ship below the Fralthra, and come in towards it. The torpedo will still lock, but you'll be able to change your direction a bit—you can raise the nose without losing sight of the Fralthra—and so if the antimatter bursts come in, you just bring up the nose a trifle. The antimatter burst will pass under you, and you'll still be on track to fire a shipkiller at the Fralthra.

You'll probably be blown to bits by your first Fralthra or two. Don't be discouraged; just keep practicing, and you'll be the scourge of Kilrathi capital ships everywhere. It's unfortunate that there aren't Fralthras available as a ship in Wing Commander Academy; it would be useful to be able to practice zapping Fralthras over and over.

In this chapter, you've seen that there is a real wealth of tactics that the seasoned pilot can use to stay alive and earn a few more medals. Practice these techniques, and you'll breeze through these games!

STRATEGIES



F I V E



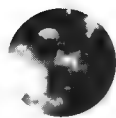


The last chapter examined tactics—methods to win dogfights, successfully escort friendly craft, and complete missions. This chapter examines how to win entire games, like *Wing Commander I*, *Special Operations 2*, or *Privateer*, for example.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, each mission has an objective, not just a blanket directive to go out and blast everything that you see to atoms. (Well, blasting things to atoms is the objective sometimes, but not always.)

Why do you care about winning entire games? Several reasons. First, there's the obvious satisfaction of having wrestled with a challenge, and won. If you can suspend your disbelief well enough to get involved with the story line, then it's actually exhilarating to destroy an enemy starbase and win the sector for the ConFeds, or to chase down the traitor in *Wing Commander II* and finally exact your well-deserved revenge for the ten years of hell that he or she's put you through. Second, you've got to be able to keep winning missions in order to stay on the "winning" track, and therefore to get access to more challenging missions. For example, if you can't successfully destroy the pirate base in *Special Operations 1*, then you'll never get a chance to defend Ghorah Khar and assist in the liberation of three Kilrathi-held worlds.

The third reason why you might want to win, or, rather, why you might want to understand what defines winning (and losing), is so that you can play all of the missions in the *Wing Commander* games. There are games that you will only play if you're on the "losing" track that are really quite good, and if you're a top gun, then you'll never get to play them. Knowing what missions you haven't flown will let you know what you've got to do in order to be able to fly those missions. For example, the original *Wing Commander I* game comes with 40 missions, only 18 of which you fly if you're unstoppable. Most people have a problem with



one of the Kurasawa missions, and so end up having to fly a few extra missions, so most folks can complete the original game in 21 missions. This means that if you do what you think you're supposed to be doing—that is, if you fly well and fulfill mission goals as best you can—then you'll probably miss some really terrific missions.

On the other hand, if you deliberately fail at some missions so that you get on one of the losing tracks in Wing Commander I game, then you'll find that you now have gotten, free of charge, 18 or 22 new missions (depending on whether you got stuck at Kurasawa 2 or not) that were there all the time—you just didn't know about them!

For some people, knowing the winning conditions will be helpful so that you can win in the first place; I've met some folks who can't get to first base with Wing Commander II, and knowing the victory conditions will make it easier to get an idea about what the game wants in the first place.

The final reason why it's useful to understand the criteria for winning is that if you know how the game works “under the hood,” then you can at last find out the answers to questions like:

- Where does my earned rank fit into winning and losing a game?
- How do the enemy react to my rank: Do the Kilrathi go harder after a Lt. Colonel than they do after a 2nd Lieutenant?
- What earns me medals?
- How important is it (or isn't it) to keep my wingmen alive?

You'll find out the answers to all those things in this chapter.

SECTORS, SYSTEMS, AND MISSIONS: KNOWING THE TERMINOLOGY

The first six Wing Commander games each take place in a sector; a sector is an area in the galaxy that encompasses a number of nearby systems. The list on the next page shows which games take place in which sectors.

Game	Sector
Wing Commander I	Vega
Secret Missions 1	Deneb
Secret Missions 2	Antares
Wing Commander II	Enigma
Special Operations 1	Enigma
Special Operations 2	Deneb

Because only one game took place in Vega, you'll sometimes read references to "the Vega campaign;" that refers to the events chronicled in Wing Commander I. The first Deneb campaign is referred to sometimes as "the Goddard mission" because of the name of the planet that the Kilrathi secret weapon destroyed in that mission.

Within each game, there are groups of missions, called *series*. Each series of missions takes place in a particular star system. Once you've finished the missions in a system, you usually move on to another system, depending on whether you're winning the game, or losing it. If you're winning, you usually move to a system that's closer to, or behind, enemy lines. If you're losing, then you retreat further back towards Earth. For example, in Wing Commander I, the first set of missions contains just two missions, and those missions are in the Enyo star system. Based on your performance at Enyo, you either move along the winning track, and go to the McAuliffe system, where you fly three missions, or retreat along the losing track to the Gateway system, where you fly three missions. There are between two and four missions in each series.

Each series in the Wing Commander I and II games is numbered, starting with number 1. Each mission within a series is also numbered, but the numbering starts from number 1 for the Wing Commander I games, and 0 for the Wing Commander II games. For example, the first mission in Wing Commander I is "series 1, mission 1," and the first mission in Wing Commander II is "series 1, mission 0."

There are two exceptions to this: Wing Commander II—just that one game, not the Special Operations games—designates the missions within a series by the letters A–D. The other exception is Privateer; Privateer



does not, so far as I can see, have a numbering scheme for the series. Because those numbers aren't very helpful when trying to recall the specifics of a mission, I'll usually refer to the name of the system in which the series took place. "Series 1, mission 1" could be "Enyo mission 1," as there is only one Enyo series, a series that is part of Wing Commander I. In contrast, there are several series that take place in Ghorah Khar, two in Wing Commander II and two in Special Operations 1.

Just to make this clear, here's another example. The Kurasawa series in Wing Commander I is either "the Kurasawa series," as there are no other Kurasawa series in any of the other games, or "series 9 of Wing Commander I." Understanding these numbers will be important for understanding game trees, which are covered in the next section.

THE GAME TREES

The number of series and missions in each Wing Commander game varies, as you can see from this list:

Game	Number of Series	Total Number of Missions
Wing Commander I	13	40
Secret Missions 1	8	18
Secret Missions 2	9	18
Wing Commander II	12 (8 actually, as 4 are almost identical to 4 others)	47 (31 without near-twins)
Special Operations 1	5	20
Special Operations 2	5	20

Notice that Wing Commander I offers the most missions, and is as a result the best deal for the money. I guess Origin decided not to bother spending too much creative effort on the losing track; that's a shame.

The way that you progress from game beginning to ultimate losing or winning is determined by each game's game tree. You can see a sample game tree here.

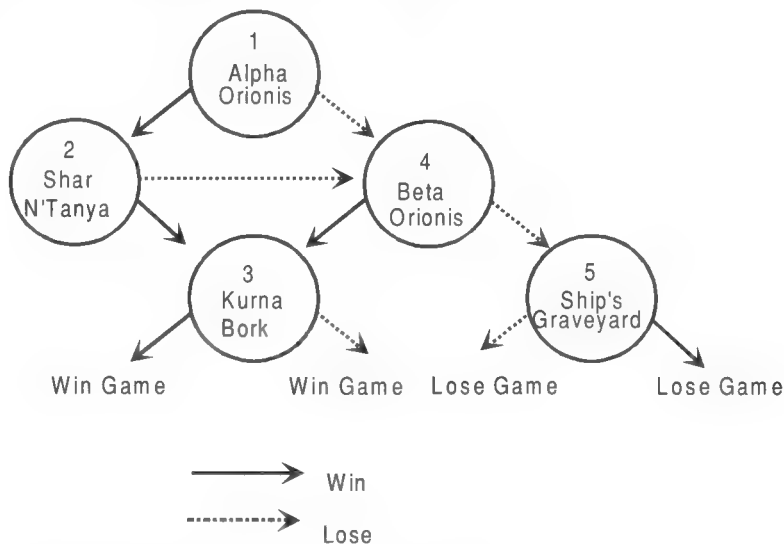
This game tree is not taken from any actual game; actual game trees are larger than this tree. Here's how to read the tree.

The tree says that you'd start this mission in series number 1, the Alpha Orionis system. For the sake of simplicity, this illustration does not show the number of missions in that system; but the game trees that you'll see will include the number of missions next to the circle for each series. If you are successful in the Alpha Orionis system, then you'll move on to series 2, in the Shar N'Tanya system. If not, then you'll move to series 4, Beta Orionis.

From Shar N'Tanya, you can move to series 3, Kurna Bork, if you are successful, or over to series 4, Beta Orionis, if you fail in Shar N'Tanya.

If you end up in Beta Orionis, which you'd never do if you played a perfect game, then you either play and win the series, which takes you to series 3, Kurna Bork, or you play and lose the series, which moves you on to series 5, Ship's Graveyard.

It's important to note something at this point. Once you move into a new series, the game essentially "forgets" how you got there. Once you're in Kurna Bork, then the game plays identically, whether you got there by the Alpha Orionis-Shar N'Tanya-Kurna Bork route, or the Alpha Orionis-Beta Orionis-Kurna Bork route. Sometimes you'll come up against





some truly impossible mission in one of the Wing Commander games, like Kurasawa 2, the Ralari defense mission in Wing Commander I. You may think that you've got to keep playing and replaying the mission until you get it right. But you needn't succeed at that one mission in order to win the whole game; if you fail at Kurasawa 2, then all it means is that you've got to fly three extra missions at the Rostov system.

Now, that doesn't imply that there aren't some must-do missions. Unfortunately, the more recent Wing Commander games have become very "linear" in that there's only one path to victory, and you've got to complete every single mission, or you lose the game. But check the game maps in this book before you decide that you're hopelessly stuck at some game.

Notice something else here. Once you've begun the Kurna Bork series, then you've won. Sure, there's a few missions to fly, but the truth is that if you were to just leave your base ship and then eject from every one of the Kurna Bork missions, you'd still win the game. Ditto for the Ship's Graveyard missions. Once you're in the Ship's Graveyard system, you've lost, no matter how well you fly. Some of the games have series like this, with predetermined outcomes. Some series are actually irrelevant; there are four series in Wing Commander II that don't affect your game outcome, no matter how well or poorly you fly.

HOW TO WIN OR LOSE A SERIES

Now that you've seen a game tree, and you know that to move from series to series you must either win or lose a previous series, the next logical question is, "what's the definition of 'winning' and 'losing'?"

The answer depends on whether you're playing the first group of Wing Commander games—Wing Commander I, Secret Missions I, and Secret Missions II, the second group of Wing Commander games (Wing Commander II and Special Operations), or Privateer. The victory conditions for each of these games are very different. The first group of games uses a scoring system to determine if you win or lose a series. The second group of games uses particular missions—"key" missions—to assess

success or failure. Privateer demands nothing less than perfection: You successfully complete each goal of each separate mission, or the game's over.

WINNING A WING COMMANDER I SERIES

The Wing Commander I group of games has a really neat and sometimes subtle system for determining whether or not you've won a series. Each series has, of course, a number of missions, and each mission has certain goals. Each goal has a numeric value. The scores for your successfully completed goals must add up to some value, or you've failed that series. For example, suppose you've got a series with three missions.

Mission 1 goals:

- reach nav 1 (5 points)
- reach nav 2 (5 points)
- destroy the Snakeir (10 points)

Mission 2 goal:

- Destroy Dorkir (20 points)

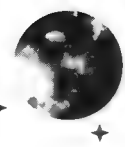
Mission 3 goal:

- escort Drayman (10 points)

Series required score: 35

Total possible points: 50

Now, before I go any further, I'll note that this may be looking kind of strange. After all, where did all these score values come from? They're certainly not anything that Colonel Halcyon explains. No, there's nothing in the game documentation that explains this. Instead, this information was enumerated by David Raley, a Wing Commander player of some fame on CompuServe's FSFORUM area. Dave, or "Center," (his callsign), did a lot of work (or a lot of dumpster diving at Origin) to get the goal



values. (If this information turns out to be useful to you, then don't forget a salutary barrel roll for Dave as you dock with the *Tiger's Claw*.)

Anyway, let's see how to use these "victory points," as Dave has named them. Notice the kinds of goals that are possible: touch a nav point, destroy an enemy ship, or escort a friendly ship. If you add up all the possible victory points, then you'll find that their sum—50—is greater than the amount needed to win this series. If you play around with the numbers a bit, then you'll see that there are many ways to win this series.

- You can hit nav 1 and nav 2 in mission 1, and bypass the Snakeir, then destroy the *Dorkir* in mission 2, and successfully escort the *Drayman* in mission 3, for a total of 40.
- You can go straight to the Snakeir and destroy it, avoiding nav 1 and nav 2 (there may be asteroids or other enemy ships at those locations), then get the *Dorkir* and escort the *Drayman*, and you're in with 40 points.
- You can fulfill all the goals of missions 1 and 2, and just eject from your ship at the start of mission 3.

Now, not all missions are this easy. Some series have just a few high-point goals, and high required scores, making each mission in the series essential. But understand that there's a lot of things that don't always earn you victory points.

WINNING A WING COMMANDER II SERIES

For the Wing Commander II games (Wing Commander II and Special Operations), Origin developed a simpler set of victory conditions. As with the earlier games, each series contains four missions. But only one goal in one mission determines whether or not you advance to the next mission. In some serieses, believe it or not, your actions have no result whatsoever—there are three series in the Wing Commander II game (Niven and the winning versions of Novaya Kiev, Tesla) where you can

just plain eject from every single mission, and you stay on the winning track!

This confused me at first, when I first played Wing Commander II, as I was clearly blowing some missions, and so expected to find myself on the losing track. But I often found that I didn't need to replay those missions, as I was clearly moving forward towards K'tithrak Mang, and the chance to win the game.

That means that the way to win these games is to find out which mission and goal is most important, and then focus on those. The other missions are fun, and you should play them with a fierce determination to win them—but in the end, it's only the key missions that count.

WINNING PRIVATEER

Privateer uses the most demanding game-winning criteria of all. Simply stated, to win in Privateer, you must complete every single goal of every single mission. Fortunately, most of the Privateer missions are simple. Unfortunately, there are a few Privateer missions that are real killers...but more on them in Chapter 14.

WINGMEN, RANKS, MEDALS, AND WINNING

By now, you may have figured out the answer to some of the questions posed in the beginning of this chapter:

- Where does my earned rank fit into winning and losing a game?
- How do the enemy react to my rank: Do the Kilrathi go harder after a Lt. Colonel than they do after a 2nd Lieutenant?
- What earns me medals?
- How important is it (or isn't it) to keep my wingmen alive?

The answers to the first, second, and fourth questions are that your rank has nothing to do with winning, the Kilrathi don't care what your rank is, and you can win these games even if you bury every one



of your wingmen—they have absolutely nothing to do with winning.

Interesting, isn't it? The rank, medals, and wingmen are all basically just window dressing for the game. You earn promotions by killing enemy ships. Each ship is worth a specific number of "medal points," and once again, David Raley has thankfully worked out the specific values of the kill points for us:

Ship	Medal Points
Salthi	7
Dralthi/Krant	10
Gratha/Jalthi/Hhriss	15
Dorkir	15
Ralari	25
Fralthi	50
Snakeir	70
Star Post	75
Confederation Ship	-1
Friendly ship saved	25

Notice that you lose a point for each ConFed ship lost; this is the only sense in which losing a wingman can be important, as that negative point might cost you a medal. (Again, however, it can never cost you a mission.) You also get 25 points for successfully escorting a ship.

ATTAINING PROMOTION

You attain promotions (where possible) by accumulating medal points. There is not a specific number of medal points for each new rank, as the game allows it to vary just a bit randomly.

EARNING MEDALS

You may wonder why you can sometimes just destroy nine Dralthi and win a medal, and other times you toast nine Jalthi and get nothing.

Medals are not like promotions—you're not always "eligible" for the game to use your kill points to give you a medal.

Each mission may have a medal predetermined for it by the Origin game designers—they'll decide to essentially "offer" a bronze, silver, gold star, or a Pewter Planet. Only one medal is available—it's not like you can get either a bronze or a silver depending on how you fly. To get that medal, you've got to accumulate a certain number of medal points—you, not your wingman, must make the kills—in that mission. Enemy ships that destroy themselves on asteroids, or enemies that blow each other up (yes, it happens) don't qualify.

You'll find the information about what medals are available, and how many medal points are needed to earn the medals, in the mission write-ups, starting in Chapter 7.

Before going on to the mission write-ups, however, how about an overall look at the Wing Commander stories? For that, turn to the next chapter...but first, what to do when all else fails?

Simple: Cheat.

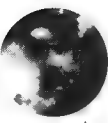
CHEATING IN WING COMMANDER

In order to make the jobs of Origin's play-testers a bit easier, the programmers of the Wing Commander games added secret commands to simplify playing the game. You can use those commands to win a particularly difficult mission. Before describing these commands, however, let me make a quick warning.

A WARNING ABOUT GAME CHEATS

If you use these "cheats," use them only to recover from a game crash or as a means to get to a particular mission. Cheating in these games really takes the fun out of them.

This is a serious warning, believe me. I made the mistake of using the cheat to finish the last series in Special Operations I, a series that includes Fralthra strike missions. (I reasoned that I just wanted to get the game over with, and how important could a few missions be?) Months



later, I went back and tried to run the Fralthra strike mission without the cheat. Boy, was that hard! I was just about convinced that I'd never figure it out at all, when an approach occurred to me in my sleep. I got up at about 3 A.M., went over to my computer, and played the Fralthra strike mission until 5:30 A.M....but I managed to kill the darned thing. It may sound silly, but getting the insight to zap that Fralthra, and having it work, felt like one of the most satisfying things I did in all of 1992.

(And, in case you're wondering, I do have a real life with its own successes and failures—in 1992, I also wrote two best-selling books. Seeing the big sales numbers was exciting, but the neat thing about solving a computer puzzle is that you get instant gratification.) What I'm saying is that you will seriously rob yourself of a lot of the game's pleasures if you become accustomed to winning by cheating.

CHEATING IN WING COMMANDER I AND II

You play Wing Commander I or Secret Missions 1 by typing **WC**; you play Secret Missions 2 by typing **SM2**; Wing Commander II starts with **WC2**; Special Operations 1 begins with the command **SO1**; and Special Operations 2 starts with **SO2**. To any of these commands, you can add either the word **Origin**, or **Origin -k**, and you'll be able to play with enhanced powers (specifics on those powers coming up!).

Now, to make this cheat work, you've got to spell *Origin* right, even down to the capitalization—capital *O*, lowercase *igin*. I'm not certain if the “-k” must be in lower case, but I've always typed it that way. So, for example, you would start up Wing Commander II in cheating mode by typing

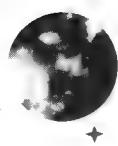
```
wc2 Origin -k
```

Now, what does this do for you? Several neat things. If you used the **Origin** option, then you can instantly destroy any enemy by sighting that enemy in your targeting computer, then pressing Alt-Del. After the usual *my offspring will avenge me!* (for some reason, that always reminds me of those bumper stickers that say *Ask me about my grandchildren*), the ship blows up. The Origin programmers call Alt-Del “the finger of God.”

Here's some other information on the cheats:

- Adding the **-k** makes you invulnerable.
- You can use Alt-Del on almost any ship, friendly or otherwise. The game crashes if you use Alt-Del on the *Bonnie Heather*, the *William Tell*, the *Hector*, or Olympus Station. There may be other "unkillable" objects, but those are the only ones that I've come across.
- If you don't have anything targeted, and you don't have invulnerability enabled with **-k**, then when you press Alt-Del, you blow yourself up. (This is only in the Wing Commander I games.)
- If you're running one of the Wing Commander II games, then you can press Alt-Ins, and all enemy ships except the capital ships blow up.
- Aces and Drakhrai (remember, a Drakhrai is a pilot who is a member of the Kilrathi Imperial Guard; don't confuse them with the Drakhri, which is a Kilrathi fighter ship) require two or three Alt-Dels to destroy them.
- If you've enabled the **Origin** cheat with the Wing Commander II games, then there are a number of other keystrokes that become active, as you can see in the list below; some of these are useful to a game player, and others were clearly only inserted to make game playtesting easier.

Keystroke	Resulting Action
Alt-Del	Zaps targeted ship
Alt-Ins	Zaps all but capital ships
Alt-i	Increases the intelligence of the enemy fighting you
Ctrl-i	Decreases the intelligence of the enemy fighting you
Alt-z	Destroys your ship
Alt-m	Displays memory status
Alt-o	Puts "splatter" damage on your cockpit



Keystroke	Resulting Action
Ctrl-v	Displays game version information
Ctrl-O	Flashes the "eject" warning
Ctrl-OO	Turns off the "eject" warning
Ctrl-p	Pauses without displaying the "Game Paused" message

One set of keystrokes, Ctrl-i and Alt-i, deserve a bit more explanation. When Origin designed the Wing Commander II games, they wanted to adjust how hard the enemy fought, based on the number of enemy ships. If it's just you and your wingman against seven Sartha, then the Sartha won't fly as well, as their pilots will be overconfident because of the favorable odds. As you eliminate the enemy ships, however, the remaining pilots fly better and fight harder, because they've come to understand that this is a life-or-death situation. Ellen Guon, one of the designers of the games, once used the Star Wars movies as a justification for this behavior. When you see Luke Skywalker up against a wing of TIE fighters, she explained, you expect the enemy fighters to be real patsies; but when Luke's going one-on-one with someone like Darth Vader, then you expect a better fight. Anyway, you can make your opponents tougher or weaker by pressing either the Alt-i key combination or the Ctrl-i key combination; again, this only works if you've started the game with the **Origin** option.

The **Origin** option does not work in Wing Commander Academy and Privateer. I know of no way to cheat in Wing Commander Academy.

CHEATING WITH A SAVE FILE EDITOR IN WING COMMANDER I AND II

If you can't win a battle the old-fashioned way, you can always go back and bribe the Records Officer and have her forge a few extra victories in your service record.

You can do that with a number of programs around that allow you to modify the files that keep track of how many battles you've won and lost, and where you are in the game. Those files are called the *save files*.

In the Wing Commander I and II games, you can save 10 previous positions, as you no doubt know. After you've won some particularly grueling victory, the very first thing to do is to go save it. But once you save it, where does it go? Every Wing Commander game has a subdirectory named GAMEDAT, and in there are the save files, among other things. You can always find your game's save file by just looking at the file with the most recent date in that directory. Wing Commander I and Secret Missions 1 use a save file called SAVEGAME.WLD, and Secret Missions 2 uses a save file called CRUSADE.WLD. Wing Commander II uses a file called SAVEGAME.WC2, Special Operations 1 uses SAVEGAME.SO1, and Special Operations 2 uses SAVEGAME.SO2.

You can use this information to keep more than just 10 saved missions. Once you've got 10 saved game positions that you want to keep, then just exit the game and change over to the GAMEDAT subdirectory, and copy the save file to a file of another name. For example, I have all my games in serieses 1–3 from Wing Commander I in a file called SER1-3.SAV. Whenever I want to go back and play one of those missions, I just copy SER1-3.SAV to SAVEGAME.WLD, and I'll find my saved games waiting for me when I next start up Wing Commander I.

As I mentioned before, some gamers have done the hard work of figuring out the internal structure of these files, and then they've written programs that allow you to go in and essentially change history—you can modify the strength of your ship, resurrect dead wingmen, change your rank, and so on. I've found these game editors on the FSFORUM of the CompuServe Information Service, in Library 9—Space Combat Simulators. The files to look for include:

WCSAV.EXE: a Wing Commander I game editor

WCVIEW.EXE: a Wing Commander I game editor

WC2SAV.EXE: a Wing Commander II game editor

PREDIT.EXE: a Privateer game editor

PREASY.ZIP: a Privateer "cheat" (explained below)

Between these editors and the Origin cheat, you can get yourself into and out of a lot of trouble!



CHEATING IN WING COMMANDER ACADEMY

As mentioned above, I know of no way to cheat in Wing Commander Academy.

CHEATING IN PRIVATEER

At first glance, Privateer seems to have a cheat function built right in—the Invulnerability and Unlimited Ammo options. With them enabled, you're invincible, right?

Actually, no: If you fly a mission with those options enabled, then you don't get paid, and the game considers you to have failed that mission.

As you know, missions in Privateer have some kind of goal: Patrol several nav points, kill a Retro at Perry, pick up and transport a load of advanced fuels from Leeds refinery to the Oxford system. If you're Invulnerable or have Unlimited Ammo while you are in the act of fulfilling a mission goal, then you automatically fail the mission; but it's okay to use the options at other times in the mission.

When you are not actually executing a mission goal, such as when you're returning to be paid, then you may run up against random enemies, enemies that you're not getting paid to dispatch. If you can run from these enemies, then by all means do so. But if you can't, such as when you're attacked while in an asteroid field, then you can always switch over to Invulnerable/Unlimited Ammo mode: just press Alt-O for the options screen, and choose the options. Then destroy your attackers, but don't forget to then switch back to the "mere mortal" options!

This advice isn't all that useful for the toughest missions, the next-to-last group of missions at Rygannon where you're mapping Kilrathi border space, as mapping missions have as their basic goals the simple act of getting to a nav point; traveling in superhuman mode on these missions will make you fail the missions.

What, then, can you do? Two things. First, you can use PREDIT.ZIP (available on CompuServe, mentioned before) to beef up your Privateer

ship, and you can even give yourself a level-5 engine (the game normally only allows level-3 engines on Centurions and Galaxies), level-5 shields, and four high-power alien guns, making your Centurion a deadly fighting machine.

Second, you can weaken everything else. The PREASY.ZIP program, also on CompuServe, modifies the Privateer game so that all ships but yours have the weakest shields and guns possible. Then even a scary-looking Kamekh falls before your mighty guns in just a few bursts.

Well, now that we've soiled our hands with the sordid business of cheating, let's get back into the proper spirit of the game, with a look at the overall story of Wing Commander, in Chapter 6.

**THE STORY
OF THE WING
COMMANDER
UNIVERSE**



S I X



When Chris Roberts created the original *Wing Commander* game, he intended for it to have top-quality graphics, good action, and an interesting story line. The story line in *Wing Commander I* was kind of simple, but as Origin has added new games to the *Wing Commander* universe, they have added more and more complete stories to each of those games. The result is a kind of collection of stories that hang together to tell the tale of astropolitics in the 27th century. While following that tale is by no means necessary to playing the game, you'll find the games a lot more enjoyable if you can understand how each one fits in with the others. To set the scene for the rest of this book, this chapter tells the overall story of the *Wing Commander* universe. Origin hasn't told us all of the story, however, so some of what you'll read in this chapter is just literary license on my part.

There's nothing particularly surprising or avant-garde about how the *Wing Commander* universe is constructed. It takes pieces from *Star Wars* and similar movies, as well as the work of two science-fiction writers who have created more than a few books based solely or in part upon races of warlike intelligent felines—Larry Niven and C.J. Cheryyh.

Niven's *Known Universe* series spans millennia of human history in its stories, but part of the series includes a bloody clash between the forces of Earth and the Kzin, a race of, well, warlike intelligent felines. Niven never talks much about that actual war in his stories, having his characters make only offhand references to the war, but later he opens the idea of the conflict up, and so several titles were written (called, appropriately, *The Man-Kzin Wars*.) Cheryyh's stories are told from the point of view of warlike intelligent felines, and tell tales of a family of these felines headed by a character named Chanur.

You needn't read any of these stories to get the overall idea of what makes the Kilrathi tick; suffice it to say that if you've ever heard the



Lieutenant Worf character on *Star Trek: the Next Generation* talk of honor and glory in battle, then you've pretty much heard the Kilrathi point of view about adult responsibilities.

Before getting into the story, however, a word of warning: There are holes in the Wing Commander stories that you could drive a truck through. I've filled in with explanatory prose wherever possible (the "literary license" mentioned before), but sometimes it's just not possible to reconcile stories from different parts of the game; in that event, I just ignored the whole problem. My apologies to those looking for an airtight story.

This chapter includes some introductory material intended to set the scene for the stories in the Wing Commander universe, then summarizes the plots in the game. With that in mind, please note: If you haven't completed one of the Wing Commander games, then don't read the plot summary—the games are much more fun if there's the element of surprise as you learn the story bit by bit, and only after having earned it by having successfully flown some difficult mission. The purpose of the plot summaries is to put the whole Wing Commander story together for those who have played the games, and as a reminder for those who've played one of the games, but can't recall exactly what happened in that game. If you're a Wing Commander vet, take a look at these summaries; I know that I played the games a couple of times before I started making sense out of the whole story.

INTRODUCTION: THE CONFEDERATION AND THE KILRATHI

From *Compton's Multisensory Encyclopedia* (copyright 2652 Compton's Cooperative, Inc.):

By the mid-23rd century, Earth still had its problems—overpopulation and poverty, to no one's surprise, still clung to the human race more closely than the atmosphere clings to the Earth. But life was better than it had been; that atmosphere, for example, was no longer choked with

toxins and, while only a handful of vertebrate species still existed on the planet, the twenty billion people of Earth had finally struck the balance between the resources that they used and the waste that they produced. The world had finally been cleaned up, and was staying cleaned up. It hadn't been easy, but the United Nations had troops from their "Corps of Engineers" everywhere, overseeing ecomanagement at all points of the compass.

Global multinational communications companies had created, *en passant*, a single global culture, and just about everyone spoke English. It wasn't an English that someone from the 20th century would recognize, but it was an English that everyone spoke. Embarrassingly enough, that didn't happen because of any plea for global unity; rather, it happened because all of the good tri-vid entertainment programs were in English, and so children ended up learning that tongue.

The small number of corporate sources of entertainment, coupled with the central planetary management, created quite accidentally what could never have been created by main force or negotiation: a world government. While the "nations" of old retained much of their bureaucracies, titles, and jobs, much of their remaining sovereignty passed away in 2277, when the United Nations took the new name of *The Terran Confederation*. Twenty billions could be managed, albeit with difficulty, on the Earth; but population was growing, and the peoples of Earth needed space to do that growing. Looking for that space, the Confederation (or the ConFeds, as they came to be known) began exploration in space. Permanent space colonies, or "arcologies," grew up in the Lagrangian points of Earth, Venus, and Mars. Teams began terraforming Venus and Mars, but that would take another several hundred years for Mars, and perhaps a thousand for Venus.

It seemed that there was no home for the human race but its ancestral (and now crowded) homeworld, when in 2338 Dr. Phillip Kharos invented—or, rather, *discovered*—the jump drive. Dr. Kharos found that a system of hyperspatial discontinuities existed, discontinuities that were like "entranceways" to a system of instantaneous travel paths. These discontinuities were invisible to the naked eye, but if the right electromagnetic field were set up in their local area, then everything near to the local field would be instantly transported to the other side of the pathway.



Dr. Kharos made this discovery while attempting to tune what was supposed to be a communications device for a navigational beacon near the orbit of Pluto. As he made an adjustment in the device's output frequency, suddenly everything went white. His vision returned to him a few moments later, and the researcher looked around his ship to ensure that nothing was damaged. It appeared that nothing was wrong—until he looked out the window. All the star patterns were wrong, and he couldn't raise the deep-space research facility on Pluto. Theorizing that whatever had happened had to do with the communications device, he retuned it to the frequency that he'd been searching for before, and was rewarded with another flash of light. His communications panel immediately lit up with "where are you?" messages from the Pluto station. He'd found the first "jump point." More research demonstrated that something had honeycombed space with these jump points, free for the using. Was the phenomenon natural, or artificial? No one could say, but their meaning was clear: Man wasn't chained to the Solar System any more.

Dr. Kharos' jump point turned out to lead to the Proxima Centauri system, near a quite habitable planet named Leto. By 2420, the Leto colony was self-sufficient. The Centauri system turned out to have more jump points in it than did the Sol system, and the human race continued to expand. In the next two hundred years, Earth people had spread to about a half dozen groups of associated star systems, or "sectors." Exploration occurred in a methodical manner, and new planets were developed with an eye to avoiding the ecological disasters of Earth. Additionally, worlds already inhabited by sentient or near-sentient beings were declared off-limits by Confederation policy.

New resources, more space, and healthier surroundings caused observers to dub the 26th century "the Century of Humanity;" there seemed to be no reason to think that it could not be the beginning of a *millennium*. That's not to say that there weren't still wars, dictators, and new weapons of destruction—there were—but they weren't that prevalent in the worlds of mankind.

This relative peace ended on the Ides of March, in the year 2629.

Earth colonies had begun to spread into new sectors, places with names like Vega and Deneb. The Vega sector was home to 11 colonized worlds. On the 10th of March, Jedora Andropolos, her ConFed ship *Iason* (spelled in the ancient way; she often joked that she went out “looking for the golden fleece”), and the standard-sized crew for an exploration vessel of *Iason*’s class all set out from the McAuliffe system. Their mission was a routine scout mission, investigating a newly-discovered jump point from McAuliffe. The *Iason* and crew entered the jump point, and appeared in the system now known as Brimstone. The system contained four planets and the usual planetary debris; the crew settled down to do a Level One system map, a cursory model of the sizes and velocities of the bodies in the system. They were surprised, then, when a small, fast-moving body was measured to be approaching them from an outer planet, 130 million kilometers away, at roughly 0.1 percent of lightspeed. It could be nothing else but an alien ship! In the five days that it took to reach them, the Captain had time to make several log entries in which she talked in excited tones. Terrans had met other races, yes, but never before had we met a fellow spacefaring race! Relay droids placed at either end of the jump point between McAuliffe and Brimstone allowed the folks back home to watch in almost-realtime as the alien ship grew larger and closer. It didn’t look all that different from one of our ships, most watchers thought. Captain Andropolos sent a greeting message to the alien ship, and waited.

Much of Human space also waited, watching the images sent by the relay droids. Some didn’t get those images for days, due to the great distances involved; but over half of humanity watched nonetheless, the inhabitants of each planet feeling as if the images that they saw were happening in real time. On the *Iason*, twenty-two minutes passed. In that time, *Iason* cameras played upon the surfaces and planes of the alien ship. It was hard not to wonder if those tubes didn’t hold torpedoes; if those barrels weren’t guns of some kind—and why were there so many of them? The answer came in one white flash, and the loss of the signal from the *Iason*. The images shifted, coming now from cameras on the relay droid, showing the *Iason* destroyed in one large volley.



Later, ConFed found out that the ship that had greeted the *Iason* was *Hero's Fang*, a Frath'ek cruiser (a precursor to the Fralthi and Fralthra ships). The *Fang* then approached the relay droid, but the droid self-destructed at a remote command from ConFed in McAuliffe; after all, it could be that these belligerent aliens did not yet know of jumps, and there was no point in giving them any clues about where the poor *Iason* came from.

The aliens *did* know of jumps, as it turned out, but hadn't known about that particular jump point. Reasoning that prey lay on the other side of the jump, but that it was likely to be well-armed prey, the aliens mined the jump point, then went back to Brimstone Base and assembled a huge starfleet. They tested that fleet by sending it out to other nearby systems, finding out which ones were homes to their new apelike opponents. Once there, the aliens engaged in acts of piracy and destruction, but the battles weren't all one-sided; ConFed forces captured an ejected alien pilot and, after some experimentation, discovered drugs that would act like a truth serum on the man-sized, cat-like creature.

That was when the enemy finally got a name.

Kilrathi.

They were from a world named Kilrah, located as far from Vega as was Earth. The pirate knew little of the overall expansion plan, save that it was the duty and right of the warrior race to expand as they liked, even to places already inhabited by sentient beings. "Life conquers life," he explained. "Do you not eat the meat of other beings? Then how can you condemn us for taking planets from lesser beings?" The Kilrath'ra—his word for himself—*did* know that a large fleet was being assembled, for the purpose of systematically going through the Vegan human worlds, enslaving them one by one.

Between the years 2629 and 2634, the Confederation built a great fleet, waiting for a move from the Kilrathi forces. The ConFeds had a fleet, but they didn't know where to *put* that fleet, as the Kilrathi had conducted pirate attacks on a number of systems; which one would the cats attack? Some felt that McAuliffe was the obvious target, but others felt that Enyo, with its important central position in Terran Vegan space,

would be better. There was no way to know, so in the end some of the fleet went to Enyo, and some to McAuliffe.

What awaited the Terran forces at McAuliffe was an invasion force twice the size of the Terran force. Before the Enyo fleet could be brought to the defense of McAuliffe, the Terrans were destroyed. Every single ship was blasted to atoms by the larger Kilrathi force. But the Terrans sold their lives dearly, as the saying goes, and left the Kilrathi badly damaged. Hearing that the Enyo fleet was on its way, the Kilrathi ran to their new military base in orbit around Kharak Tar, a planet later known to Terran forces as Venice. Forcing the Kilrathi to take sufficient losses and withdraw was something of a victory to the Confederation, but taking the gigantic losses in staff and materiel was something of a loss. Neither side had really won, and both smarted for a rematch.

That rematch came five years later, in 2639. This time, the Kilrathi went for the big prize—Enyo. Moving several orbital fortresses around the planet, they laid siege to “the crossroads of Vega.” Again, the Confeds were caught unawares, and had to rush the fleet to Enyo, playing the old game of catch-up—but this time with the lives of several million colonists hanging in the balance. Clever maneuvering by the Terran forces routed the Kilrathi, sending them back over the border to their side of the Vega sector.

At this writing (2650), the Confederacy is pressing forward into the Kilrathi colonies along the border of Terran and Kilrathi space. As there can be no living with the Kilrathi as neighbors, we have no choice but to remove them from the sector by force.

—end encyclopedia entry.

WING COMMANDER I

Wing Commander I tells the story of two months in the year 2654, when a Bengal-class carrier, the *Tiger's Claw*, fights an offensive action into the heart of the Kilrathi holdings in Vega. The game chronicles the first great campaign of the war, the Vega campaign. Your actions as pilot, your successes and failures, determine whether the Terrans take and hold all of Vega or retreat in ignominy, abandoning all of Vega to the Kilrathi.



The missions start in Enyo with simple missions and weak opponents, and move through a number of star systems, culminating either in the Venice series, a tough set of missions leading to victory, or the Hell's Kitchen series, difficult missions which mean defeat no matter how well you fly. The missions include patrols, which have as their main objectives simply getting to a set of navigation points; strikes, which require destroying some target; and escort missions, which require that you assist some other craft in safely getting somewhere. There truthfully isn't much of a plot in the original Wing Commander game—just lots of missions, and many good ones at that. This first game is probably the best of the lot, and that's saying something, as the eight games are all terrific.

SECRET MISSIONS 1

After the success (one hopes) of the Vega mission, the nearby Deneb sector gets a terrible surprise. A thriving colony of 250,000 people at Goddard suddenly goes silent, neither acknowledging nor sending transmissions. The *Tiger's Claw* rushes to the scene, but it is too late: All that remains of the colony is twisted wreckage, and no one is left alive.

Telemetry from the communications and monitoring satellites circling Goddard indicate that a small force of Kilrathi jumped in-system. No orbital fortresses were in the battle group, just a couple of Fralthi dreadnoughts, a wing of Krants, and a Grantha escort accompanied a new Kilrathi ship. The ship maneuvered into position, took one shot ... and Goddard died.

It's clear that the Kilrathi have a new and amazingly awful weapon of destruction, a planet-killer that the ConFed HQ has code-named the "Sivar." Admiral Tolwyn of fleet HQ has told the *Tiger's Claw* to follow the Sivar into Kilrathi space and destroy it at all costs; the Sivar must not return to Kilrah, lest the cats use the information in it to build more Sivars.

There's tension on the *Claw* from the very beginning. Maniac has strange apocalyptic dreams, everyone is pessimistic, and there's a lot of talk that the mission is a suicide one. One game series involves your character attacking and destroying a ConFed Drayman-class transport vessel and defending a Kilrathi Dralthi fighter, but that's not all: Eventually you

have to go up against an Exeter-class ship that was stolen by the Kilrathi, a ship known as the *Gwynefar*. The *Gwynefar*'s backed up by a complete complement of Kilrathi-flown Rapiers, and this is not a simple mission.

Later in the game, you finally get the Sivar in your sights, but it jumps away before you even have a chance to open fire on it. But that's not bad—the sensor information that you picked up allows Tactical to determine that the planet-killer weapon will not work against single ships. If you can get close enough to it, apparently, and so long as there isn't a jump point for it to run away to, then you can probably destroy it. But how to lure it into range?

A number of quick hyperspace jumps brings the *Tiger's Claw* near a major Kilrathi fuel depot. The depot is heavily guarded, but if you can destroy it, then the Sivar will arrive, low on fuel and unsuspecting. When it does, you destroy it.

Once the Sivar has been destroyed, we find out that the Kilrathi fleet's admiral ventured out into human space too soon with the Sivar—the Emperor apparently thought that the raid on Goddard was too daring—and so the Emperor puts the Admiral to death. It is not until Wing Commander II that we find out that the Admiral was the Emperor's only son and Prince Thrakhath's father.

The mission occupies 36 days.

SECRET MISSIONS 2

Deneb and Vega sectors are quiet, after the rout chronicled in Wing Commander I and the damage from Secret Missions 1. In actuality, the Secret Missions 1 carved quite a swath through Kilrathi space, but nothing more is ever said of it, so the Confederation must have decided not to move in and consolidate its gains.

In the Antares sector, the Confederation is welcoming a new race, the Firekkans, of the Firekka system, into the Confederation. The Antares sector is not even close to the border of Kilrathi space, but for some reason, a huge Kilrathi fleet is moving into the sector—almost 10,000 ships!

Since HQ isn't quite sure what's going on, you're sent out on some patrol/recon/strike missions. Early on, it's clear that Secret Missions 2 is



intended to be tough. For one thing, the Dralthi are more dangerous. Besides that, there is a new heavy fighter that is quite fast, named the Hhriss. It is paired with a new carrier called the Snakeir, which looks about as big as the *Tiger's Claw*.

Even more interesting, a Kilrathi Fralthi carrier defects to the ConFed side, commanded by nobleman Ralgha nar Hhallas. Using the Dralthis that form the Fralthi's escort, you fly a few espionage missions, trying to pick up some intership chatter that may give some clue about what's going on. Meanwhile, Ralgha is being chemically debriefed.

It turns out the Cult of Sivar, a warlike religion, performs a major ceremony called the Sivar Eshrad every now and then—but the location of the ceremony is determined by some arcane calculation, and that calculation is the thing that lead thousands of ships to Firekka. The conquest of the planet will be a massive offering to Sivar.

Now, there's no way for the *Claw* to take on all those ships, so HQ decides instead to demoralize the Kilrathi by disturbing the ceremony, killing the warrior-priestesses. You fly interference so that the Marines can land, and the Kilrathi ground troops can't get to Firekka, buying enough time for the Marines to accomplish their mission. With the ceremony disrupted, the Kilrathi leave, although not without leaving some bodies and wreckage behind. Again, the *Claw's* ships cannot destroy the Kilrathi fleet, but it can bloody their nose well enough that they give up the whole thing, and run home.

Even though the enemy fleet is not destroyed, it's clear from the posturing transmissions of a "Prince Thrakhath, heir to the throne of Kilrah" that all is not well. The bloody cult of Sivar has never been popular with the commoners, and now nobility like Ralgha are beginning to feel that the deaths of the war with humans are not proper sacrifices to Sivar, as civilian casualties are unacceptable offerings, and this see-saw war of "lose a system, win a system" creates too many useless deaths and not enough concrete victories. In fact, the dissatisfaction with the war is so great that on one Kilrathi planet, Ghorah Khar, a revolution is brewing. As the Kilrathi move out, the Firekka scour their planet for any remaining enemy soldiers, and the *Tiger's Claw* moves off to the Enigma sector

to assist Ghorah Khar. On a more personal note, Colonel Halcyon has told you that you'll soon be commanding the *Claw* in his place.

WING COMMANDER II

The Enigma sector is held by the Kilrathi, but the ruling class' hold on the people is slipping, as evidenced, again, by the revolt on Ghorah Khar. The sector is mainly of strategic importance, as it holds a very large number of jump points, including mini-jump points that allow a starship to move from one side of a system to another by jumping, rather than tedious sub-light travel. Because of that, Enigma plays host to a Kilrathi battle fortress at K'tithrak Mang. Further, Thrakhath himself needs Ghorah Khar, as its shipyards are the sole fabrication point for a new and important Empire ship. The *Tiger's Claw* moves into Enigma and takes on the fortress at K'tithrak Mang. Your job is to defend the *Claw*, something that you do—until you encounter a new kind of ship, a fast fighter with almost no shields, but the ability to disappear!

Meanwhile, the *Tiger's Claw* moves into Enigma, looking to find—and destroy—K'tithrak Mang. While on a patrol, you meet the new stealth fighters. You find that the ships are fairly easy to destroy, once you've locked onto them, but their appearing and disappearing makes destroying them slow going. Chasing them lures you away from the *Claw* for just a bit too long ... and when you return to your carrier, you see nothing but the debris of your old ship—the Kilrathi destroyed it.

Landing on another carrier, the *Austin*, you are thrown into the brig and charged with desertion. Your protests that you were distracted by a new "stealth" fighter ship are met with jeers and derision. "Check my flight logs," you say. "We did," reply the investigators. "The logs are mysteriously—and conveniently—damaged."

While the damaged logs can't testify in your favor, they can't testify against you either, and so there isn't enough evidence to hang you with. Admiral Tolwyn does the next best thing to hanging, however: He busts you down to Captain, and sends you to Gwennen Station, a quiet communications relay station in an adjoining system. You'll probably never



fly a fighter again. Embittered, you take your new post, vowing to restore your standing in the military.

Shortly thereafter, the revolt on Ghorah Khar is successful, and the planet has changed hands. While Ghorah Khar isn't that important in most ways, it does house the shipyards from which the stealth fighters came; losing those shipyards will set back Thrakhath's expansion plans for a few years.

Ten years goes by; it's now 2664. Everyone now knows you as the "coward of K'tithrak Mang," and even you're starting to believe it. The old ships are gone, replaced by new craft with similar missions to the old ones, but better weaponry, shields, and computers.

Life is quiet on Gwennen. Painfully quiet. Then, one day, the Confederation capital ship *Concordia* appears, sending an urgent *Mayday!* message. Gwennen station is the ConFed base around, so you take off with your wingman Shadow and eliminate the threat—Kilrathi Sartha fighters. Landing on the *Concordia*, you find yourself now on a ship commanded by Admiral Tolwyn, with its chief pilot Jeanette Devereaux—your old wingman Angel! Spirit, Doomsday, and Jazz—other pilots with whom you've flown in the past—are also on the *Concordia*. They're all glad to see you, except for Jazz, who rides you mercilessly about the loss of the *Tiger's Claw* ten years ago. Although he's not very happy about it, Tolwyn must allow you to stay on to fly, as he needs experienced pilots.

After your first flight for the *Concordia*, a pair of Drakhri box in Shadow and destroy her ship; she's killed too quickly to eject. The game then settles down to a sequence of events somewhat like Wing Commander I—patrol, escort, and strike missions. Along the way, however, it's clear that there is a traitor onboard the *Concordia*, as sabotage keeps occurring. At the same time, you have occasional run-ins with the stealth fighters that you met ten years ago, but for some reason your log disk keeps getting damaged, so your repeated engagements with the stealth fighters are viewed with a fair amount of suspicion, even by Angel. The Kilrathi aren't the only ones with spies in place, however—you meet up again with James Taggart, "Paladin," who now has retired and has apparently become a free trader, but who actually is a Confederate spy.

The sabotage continues, together with a scary admission from Spirit. Her fiancé Phillip, who was captured ten years ago at Goddard, has been imprisoned for the last decade here in the Enigma sector. She has been told via an anonymous e-mail message that if she agreed to help the Kilrathi, then perhaps she could see Phillip; if not, the message says, Phillip will die a slow and painful death. Spirit tells you that she refused the offer, but you've got to wonder. Her anger and depression over the whole matter causes her to make a kamikaze attack on the enemy starbase where Phillip is being held prisoner, destroying the base by exploding her ship against it, killing Spirit...and reducing further the number of people left from the *Tiger's Claw*. Later, Angel expresses how frustrating it is to lose friends and loved ones to the war, and the two of you fall into each other's arms.

The *Concordia* continues to slug its way forward towards K'tithrak Mang. To render the station partially blind before the *Concordia's* attack, you destroy a Kilrathi listening post at Khorah Pahk. Shortly thereafter, you monitor a transmission from a Ralatha that allows Tactical to zero in on the exact location of K'tithrak Mang. Then things start moving quickly.

A patrol mission brings you up against the stealth fighters once again—but this time, your flight recorder isn't damaged, and you've got the evidence. Once the fact that the stealth fighters, or *Strakha*, as they are called, are established to be real, the traitor panics, steals a ship, and runs. You chase the traitor, who turns out to be Jazz, and destroy his ship, but he ejects safely, and Angel picks him up so that he can stand trial. Shortly thereafter, you attack the base at K'tithrak Mang, a battle that includes a dogfight with Thrakhath himself, and the final destruction of K'tithrak Mang. Your reputation is restored, you've been vindicated, and the Enigma sector is more firmly in Human hands. As the credits roll, we see Thrakhath's ejection chair floating in space, and Thrakhath vowing to return.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS 1

The game opens with a flashback of Thrakhath's ejection seat drifting in space after his loss to you at K'tithrak Mang. As he drifts in



space, Thrakhath vows that he will return. He is retrieved by a Kamekh. Later, Thrakhath talks with one of his cousins, Khasra, about how Ghorah Khar will be retaken. Thrakhath tells him that he (Khasra) will lead the assault on the rebels at Ghorah Khar, the Kilrathi world that aligned itself with the Confederation ten years ago. Khasra replies that being the first wave to attack Ghorah Khar would be suicide.

Thrakath bristles at Khasra's questioning of his orders. Khasra replies that, after the defeat at K'Tithrak Mang, Thrakhath should not be in command of this, or any other battle fleet.

Meanwhile, back at the *Concordia*, now that you've been restored to fully active status, Tolwyn offers you a spot in the Special Operations team, the pilots that take on the really tough jobs.

Human hold on Enigma can best be consolidated by taking complete control of the Pembroke system, which contains many of Enigma's famous jump points. After several of those missions, your transfer to Special Operations is postponed by a crisis: The crew of the Waterloo-class ship Gettysburg have mutinied, and the Gettysburg has become a pirate corsair! Some delicate negotiations with the Gettysburg reveal that its captain ordered the crew to open fire on unarmed civilian targets; the crew refused, setting the bridge staff off into space in one of the new Crossbow bombers. Most of the crew wants to remain in good military standing, but some of the Gettysburg mutineers have taken control of a supply depot in the Rigel system, another system in the Enigma sector. The crew members on the Gettysburg are offered amnesty if they'll just surrender their ship; after all, the order to fire on civilian targets was an illegal one, so they didn't really do anything wrong. The mutineers on the supply depot, however, are dangerous, and there are several unsuspecting transports en route to the depot. You destroy the pirate base, saving the transports.

Shortly thereafter, communications with Kilrathi rebels on the Ralatha ship Shar N'Tanya reveal that there is a Kilrathi plan to retake Enigma, in a communications pod on the edge of the Ghorah Khar system. You are now based at Olympus Station, which orbits Ghorah Khar and assists in its defense. You snatch the communications pod and return to Olympus,

where ConFed strategists replace the actual battle plans with ones that will deliver the Kilrathi forces right where the ConFeds want them.

The initial part of the force of Kilrathi ships do, indeed, appear, but it appears that some of them are fighting *each other*! You escort Paladin and his free trader ship, the *Bonnie Heather*, to investigate. After the remaining Kilrathi ships are destroyed or routed, you rescue an ejected Kilrathi pilot, only to find out that it is Thrakhath himself! His cousin Khasra took a squadron of Gothri fighters and attempted to assassinate the prince and, after destroying his ship, left him for dead. While you are interrogating Thrakhath in the *Bonnie Heather's* brig, Khasra returns. He knows that you're harboring Thrakhath, and he gives you a choice: Surrender the prince, or he'll destroy the *Bonnie Heather*. Before you can take any action, however, Thrakhath escapes, stealing one of the new Crossbows and jumping away to somewhere else.

Once Thrakhath has escaped, the remainder of the Kilrathi forces jump in, most particularly a Fralthra. You destroy that, and you hear that not only is Ghorah Khar still firmly in ConFed hands, but three more worlds (N'Tanya, K'arakh and Shariha) have successfully rebelled against the Kilrathi hierarchy as well. You win the game...

... or do you? The final scene shows Thrakhath debriefing the Emperor. Clearly, something's up, as the Emperor is no longer at Kabla Meth, but instead is at Kilrathi Battle Command, in the Hhallas System, M'shrak Sector. At M'shrak there is some rejoicing going on. Thrakhath reports to the Emperor that they have successfully deceived the Terrans by leading them to defend Enigma and the Ghorah Khar sector; Thrakhath says that there was nothing of value at Ghorah Khar to begin with. With the bulk of the Terran forces at Enigma, it was a simple matter for the Kilrathi to move into Deneb, and capture Deneb Sector Command in less than six hours.

The Emperor is pleased, but can't resist a little jab. "This is better than your failure at K'Tithrak Mang," he comments. Thrakhath acknowledges that he didn't handle that as well as he could have, and says that he will not fail the Emperor again. The Emperor replies that it would be very... unfortunate... if he did. (Remember, this is the Emperor who had his own son—Thrakhath's father—incinerated for screwing up the Goddard



campaign.) Thrakhath also reports that your character killed Khasra. The Emperor is sad about that, but he notes that at least Khasra died honorably, which is more than the Emperor expected. Thrakhath ends by saying that he knows that the humans will return to recapture Deneb. When they do, he'll be waiting for them.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS 2

Back in Deneb sector, Jazz is tried for treason and convicted. On the way to the prison ship Alcatraz, the transport ship Bastille is attacked by Mandarins—human sympathizers with the Kilrathi—and Jazz is freed. The Mandarins spirit him away.

Meanwhile, now that the Kilrathi are back in the Deneb sector, they have established a new starbase at Kabla Meth in the Deneb sector. The emperor talks with Thrakhath, angry that Thrakhath has attacked civilian targets. Thrakhath replies that the enemy will not soon forget the damage left behind. The emperor reminds Thrakhath that “Fear is your most powerful weapon—use it wisely.” He also asks if it will be possible to get a prototype of a new Confederation ship, the Morningstar? Thrakhath says that he's working on it.

Speaking of the Morningstar, you learn of it soon when you are reunited with Maniac, who now sports a new and bizarre hairdo, a gold earring, and permanently bloodshot eyes. He heads a squad called the “Wild Eagles,” test pilots for the new Morningstar, a hot new fighter with some features that Maniac “can't even tell you about.” One of the Eagles is a hotshot pilot by the name of Maria Grimaldi, callsign “Minx.” You save her life when she's forced to eject from a faulty prototype Morningstar.

The Mandarins are busy, according to Paladin, your supervisor—remember, you're in Special Operations, and Taggart is the senior spy. They apparently have a large base called Ayer's Rock that Paladin swears that you'll find and destroy. A Kilrathi freighter named the *Gamal Gan* surrenders to Terran forces, and Paladin has an idea: You'll use the freighter to sneak through Kilrathi space in search of Ayer's Rock!

Before that mission, however, you participate and assist in the test flights of the new Morningstar. The other test pilots, Talon and Crossbones, turn out to be the same kind of inconsiderate jerks as Maniac. So is Minx, in her own way. After all, she makes a number of passes at you, when it's common knowledge by then that you're involved with Angel.

The loss of Jazz continues to eat at you—you had his ejected pilot chair in your sights, and you didn't blast him! The Mandarins are offering a prisoner swap, and there's a rumor that Jazz will be flying for the Mandarins (as a fighter escort, not a prisoner to be exchanged), so you fly and escort the ConFed forces. He doesn't show up, and in fact the prisoner swap is a trap. After evading the trap, however, even more treachery is exposed when Minx steals a Morningstar and heads off for Ayer's Rock! She is, it turns out, a Mandarin, and her escape killed Crossbones and left Talon injured. She escapes, but information from one of Paladin's informants in the Mandarin hierarchy leads the *Gamal Gan*, piloted by Paladin, and two Morningstars—yours and Maniac's—to Ayer's Rock.

Once Minx arrives at Ayer's Rock, Jazz reveals that her delivery of the Morningstar prototype will make him—Jazz—look good. Minx bristles, saying that it was her work that got the new ship. Jazz says that he's someone with ten years' service with the Mandarins, and she's just a new-comer. With time, Jazz explains, she could become important. Minx seems to assent, but it's clear that Jazz shafted her on this one.

At the *Gamal Gan*, Paladin announces a change of plan. He wanted to lead the *Concordia* to Ayer's Rock, but it appears that the Mandarins know that they've been found, and so are evacuating the base. It appears that either you'll have to destroy Ayer's Rock by yourself, or it won't be done—there's not enough time for the *Concordia* to get to Ayer's Rock, and it couldn't get there quickly in any event, as the *Concordia* is under siege itself. So you destroy Ayer's Rock. Jazz, however, escaped, and so you get a final rematch with Jazz. This time, you leave no survivors. Minx dies of radiation poisoning.

The final scene is from Kubla Meth. The Emperor queries Thrakhath about this recent loss, but Thrakhath shrugs it off. "The Mandarins had outlived their usefulness," he says. Besides, he claims, the diversion of



the forces to deal with the Mandarins allowed the Kilrathi forces to utterly destroy the 6th battle fleet, leaving the worlds closer to the Terran homeworld more sparsely defended. The *Concordia* is being moved to a system closer to Earth. The net effect, Thrakhath says, is that the Kilrathi have pushed further towards Earth. "Excellent," the Emperor says, making a crushing gesture with his hand, "soon we will conquer Earth itself!"

As the credits roll, a broken helmet with the name "Jazz" on it floats in open space. The credits end with "To be concluded in Wing Commander III...."

WING COMMANDER ACADEMY

There is no plot line to Wing Commander Academy. It is just a mission builder, allowing you to set up particular missions, complete with asteroids, mines, ejected pilots, starbases, enemy ships, and nav points.

PRIVATEER

Privateer has a plot line that doesn't fit exactly into the other Wing Commander plots. There actually isn't much of a plot to it.

The first part of Privateer involves no plot at all: You have a fairly weak ship, but you can do shipping, mercenary, and patrol missions to earn money to enable you to get a more powerful ship. Once you've built a top-of-the-line ship, you go meet a fellow named Ernesto Sandoval, who gives you a mysterious alien artifact. You spend the rest of the game performing missions for people who will give you information on the artifact, but only if you'll fly a few missions for them. The artifact turns out to be part of a map created by the Steltek, a race of intelligent spacefaring beings that existed eons before either the Kilrathi or Terrans. A researcher, Lemuel Monkhouse, gives you another Steltek artifact, the other half of the map.

While exploring the region described by the map, you chance upon an old derelict freighter that is an ancient Steltek wreck! Inside the wreck is an ancient Steltek fighter ship with an operational kind of gun that you've never seen before. You remove the gun, mount it on your ship,

and return to Rygannon starbase, the place that gave you your last job. (You're returning there to be paid for the job.) Along the way, an egg-shaped space ship with glowing green bumps on it starts chasing you. It's got guns like the one that you just found, and it doesn't respond to any hails, nor can you destroy it. After wandering around a bit, chased by the egg-shaped ship, you meet a representative of the Admiral's office at Perry, the military headquarters of the local sector. She says that the Admiral wants to talk to you. When you get to Perry, the Admiral tells you that wherever you go, death and destruction follows. You deduce that this is the side-effect of the egg-shaped ship. The Admiral agrees, and tells you that the fleet has assembled an ambush point out beyond the border of human space. If you'll lure the egg-shaped ship out there, then the fleet will be able to destroy it. You agree, and set off for the rendezvous point.

Along the way to the rendezvous point, you meet a live Stelte! It says that it knows that you have found a Stelte ship (the derelict), and that having any Stelte technology around is unacceptable to the Stelte—the Terrans and the Kilrathi aren't ready for the technology. The egg-shaped ship, the Stelte explains, is an automatic Stelte drone that is programmed to home in on and destroy any leftover examples of Stelte technology. You say that you'll transmit the coordinates of the Stelte derelict, but that you want something in return. The Stelte ship gives your Stelte gun a one-time charge of energy that should be enough, the Stelte says, to destroy the drone.

You go to the rendezvous point, destroy the Stelte drone, and the Stelte ship tows the derelict away, presumably to some dumping location. The Admiral thanks you for your help, and the game ends, sort of.

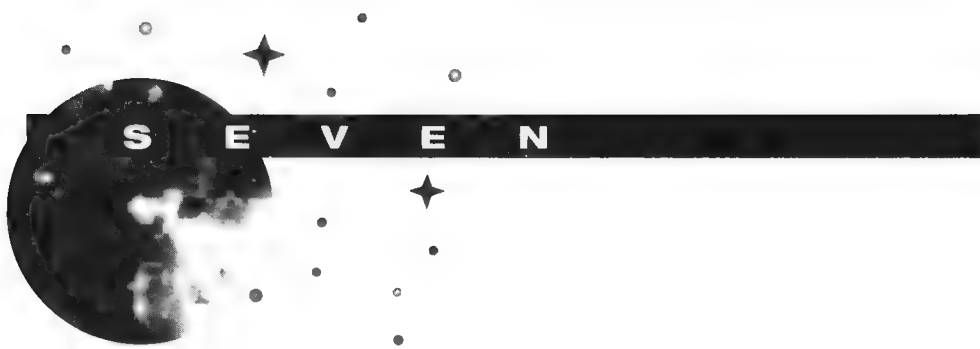
THAT'S THE OVERVIEW...

That's seven stories, and there are more on the way. Wing Commander III will probably appear in late 1994 or 1995, and several Origin folks have said that there is more in store for the Privateer game, perhaps some extra missions. But to find out the details of all of these stories, you've got to play the missions; that's where the remaining chapters of this book come in.

**THE MISSIONS
OF WING
COMMANDER I**



S E V E N

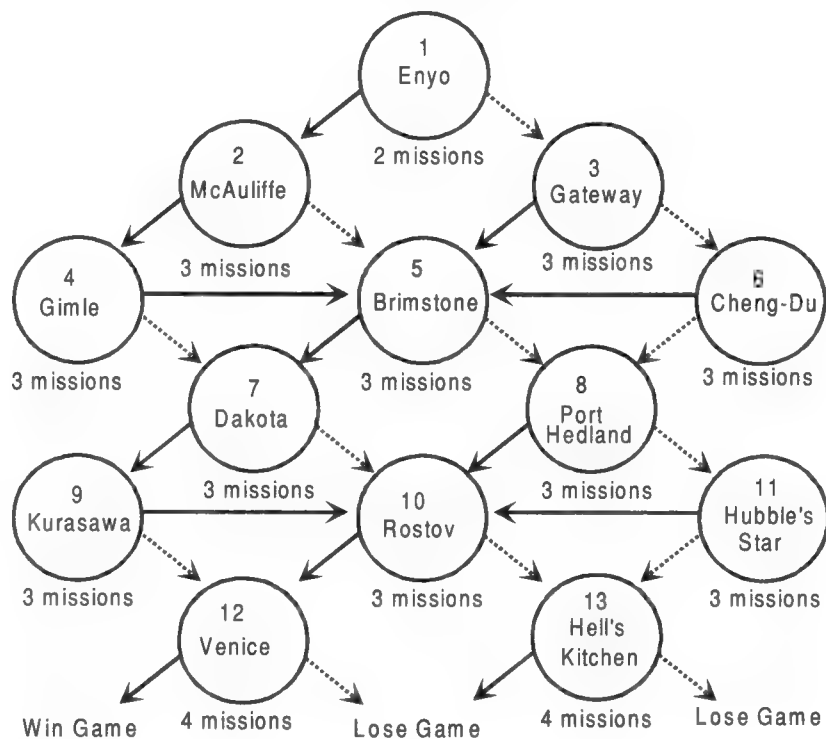


Wing Commander I was the first of the Wing Commander games to appear. It offers more missions than any of the other Wing Commander games and has the most interesting game tree. Because of all the interesting missions on the losing track, Wing Commander I is one of the few games that's nearly as much fun to lose as it is to win.

GAME OVERVIEW

Wing Commander I offers a very simple plot line. It tracks part of the Vega campaign, whose outcome is either the eradication of the Kiltrathi from the Vega sector, or the routing of humans from the Vega sector by those same Kiltrathi. The interesting part about Wing Commander I, as I mentioned a line or two back, is the varied game tree, as you see here.

There are some terrific missions in this game; let's take a look at them.



—————→ Win

- - - - -→ Lose



ENYO SERIES

The Enyo series starts you off with a pair of missions that display almost all of the kinds of things that you'll end up doing regularly throughout the Wing Commander universe. There are dogfights, nav points to hit, a ship to escort, asteroids, and docking with the *Tiger's Claw*.

You fly with Spirit, who's a fairly good fighter, and who listens to orders. If you want to make sure that she lives through this series, however, you should send her home ("return to base"); she will obey that order.

Wingman: Spirit

Ship: Hornet

Total possible victory points in this series: 15

Victory points required to win this series: 11

If you lose: You go to the Gateway series.

If you win: You go to the McAuliffe series.

ENYO MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Dralthi, 2 Salthi, asteroids

Victory points: Reach nav 1 (2), nav 2 (1), nav 3 (2), land on the *Tiger's Claw* (1)



Tiger's Claw



Nav 1



3 Dralthi



Asteroids



Nav 3



2 Salthi



Asteroids



Nav 2

Victory point total for this mission: 6

Victory points required to win this mission: 6

Possible medals: None

In this first mission, you get some practice dogfighting, dodging asteroids, and landing back on the *Tiger's*

Claw. It's a simple diamond-pattern patrol. If you hate asteroids (and who doesn't?), then you can avoid them by going from nav 1 to nav 3, then back to nav 2, as you can see in the map. That way, you don't have to slog your way through as many rocks.

ENYO MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 2

Salthi, 3 Dralthi

Victory points: Nav 1

(2), nav 2 (2), see Drayman jump out safely (5)

Victory points total for this mission: 9

Victory points required to win this mission: 5

Possible medals: Bronze star for 52 medal points

This mission gives you practice at escort missions.

The important thing here is to keep the Drayman alive, and to hit both nav points.



MCAULIFFE SERIES

McAuliffe is the second series along the winning track. Together with Enyo, it is a sort of “tutorial” series. In this series, you’ll not only get more practice with escort missions—you’ll be introduced to minefields, you’ll get to destroy your first capital ship, and you’ll meet your first Kilrathi ace.

The bad part about the McAuliffe missions is that you’ve got to fly them in a Scimitar, a slow, well-armored ship with two mass drivers—



good short-range guns. For all the bellyaching about the Scimitar, it *is* a powerful ship, and its guns are more than sufficient to dispatch that Ralari in mission 1. Light up the afterburners, and it's even got some speed. One thing to be careful about, however, is the lousy turning capability of the Scimitar—if you're on a collision course with something, turn away from it sooner than you would if you were in a Hornet, or you'll crash for sure. One of the other troublesome things about this series is that you're paired with Paladin. James is a nice guy, but he's clearly watching his own backside...although not well. You'll soon tire of hearing "they caught me with me kilts down!" He just doesn't fly or fight all that well, and there's a good chance that he'll be killed; I recommend sending him home as soon as you can—he'll listen to you.

Wingman: Paladin

Ship: Scimitar

Total possible victory points in this series: 37

Victory points required to win this series: 32

If you lose: You go to the Brimstone series.

If you win: You go to the Gimle series.



MCAULIFFE MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3
Dralhti, 3 Salthi

Victory points: Nav 1, 2,
3, 4 (2 apiece), landing (2)

**Victory point total for
this mission:** 10

**Victory points required
to win this mission:** 8

Possible medals: None

A simple patrol mission. It's mainly intended to get you familiar with the Scimitar before you get sent out to destroy a Ralari.

MCAULIFFE MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Dralthi, 2 Krants, 1 Ralari

Victory points: Nav 1 (1), destroy Ralari (10), landing (1)

Victory point total for this mission: 12

Victory points required to win this mission: 11

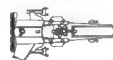
Possible medals: Bronze star for 65 medal points

Your first attack on a capital ship, and a fairly big one at that—a Ralari! Take your time against the Dralthi, as you want to be able to attack the Ralari and its Krant escort with an undamaged ship. Just bore straight in at a Dralthi, and then let fly with mass drivers—one pass should destroy a Dralthi, then you can run away, recharge your shields and gun capacitors, and return to do it again. Hint: If you don't speed up when first approaching the pack of Dralthis, then you will have enough extra firing time to take out the lead Dralthi on the first pass.

Once at the Ralari, destroy the Krants by taunting them and leading them away from the Ralari. The Ralari's guns aren't ferocious, but it's probably best all in all to avoid whatever gunfire you can. Once you've picked off the Krants, harry the Ralari's tail section with your mass drivers—just park about 2000

meters off the tail, drop the speed to 100 kps, and just fire until the gun capacitor is empty. If you're not taking many hits from the Ralari's guns, then stick around until the guns re-

charge; otherwise, use a shot of afterburners to get out of the Ralari's firing range, recharge shields and guns, and then zip back and attack the Ralari's rear again.



Tiger's Claw



4 Dralthi





MCAULIFFE MISSION 3

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krants, 3 Salthi including an ace (Bhurak Starkiller), you must defend a Drayman

Victory points: Escort Drayman to *Tiger's Claw* (10), kill Bhurak (5), nav 1 (1), landing (1)

Victory point total for this mission: 17

Victory points required to win this mission: 16

Possible medals: Silver Star for 86 medal points

You've got to escort a Drayman from a nav point to the *Tiger's Claw* with your Scimitar. Escort missions are always difficult because you're not only trying to keep yourself alive, you're trying to keep a larger, slower ship alive as well. That means that you've got to hit enemies hard and fast. The Scimitar can help you do that, as its powerful shields make it a fairly good battering ram. Once you've battered down an enemy's shields a bit, you could keep exchanging gunfire...but if you do, it gives the other bad guys a chance to blow up the thing you're supposed to be escorting. Better than wasting time dogfighting, just ram a weakened foe, and go on to your next victim. This works fairly well for Krants, as they're not as maneuverable as Salthis.

As you can see in the map, the Krants are already waiting at nav 1 for you, and the Drayman won't appear until you actually get within 1000 km of nav 1. For that reason, take your time with the Krants, being sure to stay away from nav 1. If the Drayman does tangle with a few Krants, then it's a sure thing that they'll damage its shields. Wait around until the Drayman's shields regenerate—you can find out by locking your targeting computer on the Drayman and then just watch the video display unit until the Drayman's shields regenerate fully. Don't autonav until then.

The best strategy for keeping the Drayman alive is to take out as many Krants as possible before it jumps in, and save your heat seeking missiles for the Salthis. You really want to scare off Bhurak quickly, as his hide is tough, and if he stays around he could destroy the transport before you

get a chance to save it. Lock your targeting computer on Bhurak from the beginning, and come in swinging with your mass drivers. Follow it up with a heat seeker on Bhurak, and either you'll destroy him or he'll run away. Do that quickly enough and you'll have time to pick off the other, normal Salthis.



Tiger's Claw



4 Krant (attack on the way to Nav 1)



3 Salthi (attack on the way back to the Tiger's Claw)

□ Drayman
Nav 1

As an extra, added bonus, you can escort the Drayman to the *Tiger's Claw*, but then do not land; instead, go back to nav 1. You'll find that Bhurak has returned—and now it's two against one, as you and Paladin take him on. You'll have to keep your finger on the afterburners, as Bhurak will run from you, but once you're in gun range, let him have it. If you do this, you'll rack up a Bhurak Starkiller kill and five important points toward winning this series.

GATEWAY SERIES

Gateway is the first series on the losing track. If you're at Gateway, then you probably couldn't successfully keep the Drayman at Enyo alive. I'd recommend going back to Enyo, for two reasons. First, the McAuliffe missions are more interesting. Second, if you can't perform a simple escort mission without failure, then you're just not going to finish this game satisfactorily. Use Enyo 2 as a practice run. If you're having trouble with that escort mission, play it over and over until you get good at it.

The Gateway missions are similar to the McAuliffe missions, with two very large differences: First, you fly the Hornet, and second, you don't attack a capital ship. The third mission in both McAuliffe and Gateway are escort missions, and the Hornet's weak shielding and puny guns just don't make it the ideal escort craft. As a result, I find McAuliffe 3 easier than Gateway 3.



Wingman: Paladin

Ship: Hornet

Total possible victory points in this series: 44

Victory points required to win this series: 35

If you lose: You go to the Cheng-Du series.

If you win: You go to the Brimstone series.

GATEWAY MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: Rocks (nav 1) 4 Salthi (nav 2), 2 Gratha (nav 3)

Victory points: Nav 1, 2, 3, landing: each 2 points

Victory point total for this mission: 8

Victory points required to win this mission: 6

Possible medals: None

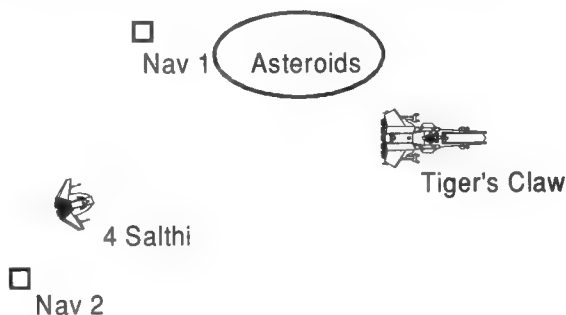
Your basic, run-of-the-mill patrol, except for the fact that you've got to take on two Grathas in a pair of Hornets.

Remember that those Grathas have both mass drivers and lasers, as well as very heavy shielding. You can beat them, but only if you use your head—and the speed and maneuverability of the Hornet.

Never, never, never take on a Gratha head-to-head. He's got better shields and guns, so you haven't a prayer of surviving a game of chicken with a Gratha. Instead, use the afterburner slide, hitting the enemy initially from the side to slow it down, then zip around back and pound its exhaust tubes. Grathas are slow enough that I can usually get a hit with a dumb-fire missile, which won't kill it, but will cause severe damage.

While you're working on one Gratha, listen for the distinctive *dunk-dunk-dunk* sound of mass drivers; that could be the other Gratha zeroing in on your backside while you're distracted. Don't fly straight for any appreciable time, or they'll lock onto you and reduce you to nothing but a fond memory.

About the Salthis, there's nothing much to say, except to remind you that one or two will probably run away. Do not chase them; instead, reset your nav computer for *Tiger's Claw*, autonav to the *Tiger's Claw*, and then reset the nav computer to vector you back to nav 2, and autonav. When you reappear at nav 2, the Salthis(s) will have returned, and you can dispatch them without losing half your afterburner fuel.



GATEWAY MISSION 2

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 2 waves of 4 Dralthis

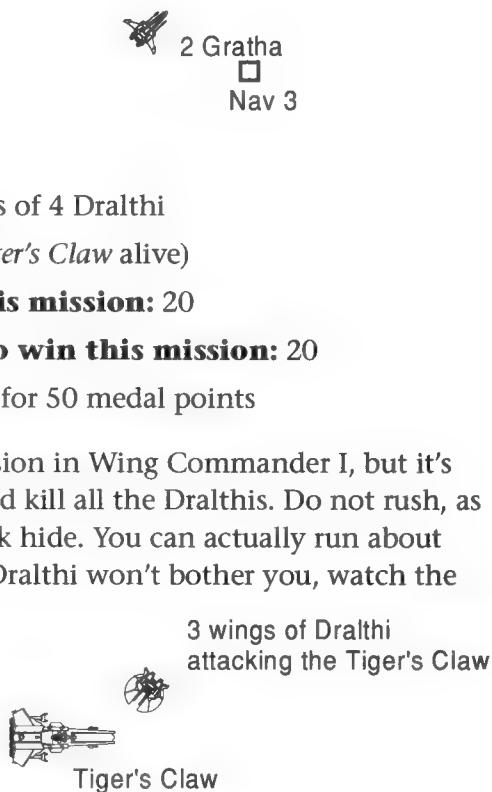
Victory points: 20 (keep *Tiger's Claw* alive)

Victory point total for this mission: 20

Victory points required to win this mission: 20

Possible medals: Silver Star for 50 medal points

This is the first "defense" mission in Wing Commander I, but it's pretty simple. Take your time and kill all the Dralthis. Do not rush, as the *Tiger's Claw* has a pretty thick hide. You can actually run about 15,000 meters away, where the Dralthis won't bother you, watch the Dralthis kill Paladin, and then blast away at the *Tiger's Claw*. It can be literally hours before the Dralthis kill the *Claw*, and sometimes the *Claw's* own guns take out the Dralthis. The only real challenge in this mission is to keep Paladin alive, and kill the five Dralthis that you'll need for your Silver Star.





In this case, the mission “map” isn’t much of a map since you don’t actually travel anywhere.

GATEWAY MISSION 3

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Gratha, 4 Salthis with ace (Bhurak Starkiller)

Victory points: Escort Drayman to *Tiger's Claw* alive (15), Bhurak (1)

Victory point total for this mission: 16

Victory points required to win this mission: 15

Possible medals: Silver Star for 62 medal points



3 Salthis (attack on the way back to the Tiger's Claw)



Tiger's Claw



5 Krant (encountered on the way to Nav 1)



Drayman



Nav 1

A tougher escort mission than its McAuliffe counterpart. As with McAuliffe 3, you'll do best to lure the Grathas away from the jump point (you can see them in the illustration) and destroy them before the transport jumps in. Use the speed of the Hornet, but you may not want to fly at top speed—you may end up ram-

ming the slower Grathas. Save your missiles to annoy and chase away Bhurak quickly, then destroy the other Salthis. As with McAuliffe 3, you can then return and finish off Bhurak.

GIMLE SERIES

Gimle is the third series in the winning sequence. It gives you some practice with a Raptor, which is my favorite of the Wing Commander I ships, and you get to test-fly a Rapier. The difficult part of this series is the first mission, a tough defense of an Exeter that's beset by Jalthis. You



can actually complete this series and lose the Exeter—but you can only do it by completing everything else perfectly.

Wingman: Angel

Ship: Raptor/Rapier

Total possible victory points in this series: 35

Victory points required to win this series: 25

If you lose: You go to the Brimstone series.

If you win: You go to the Dakota series.

GIMLE MISSION 1

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 2 waves of 2 Salthi, 3 Jalthis

Victory points: Defend Exeter (10), land (2)

Victory point total for this mission: 12

Victory points required to win this mission: 12

Possible medals: Gold star for 83 medal points

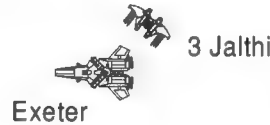
As you can see in the map, you get to start off by warming up with the two waves of two Salthis. Switch to full guns and do not use any missiles against the Salthis—you'll need them for the Jalthis. Take your time with the Salthis, and don't lose any armor, as you're going to need it at the Exeter. Watch out for Angel—she's such an idiot that she'll often crash into you. The single most important thing about using the guns in the Raptor and the Rapier is that both guns can quickly and easily drain your gun capacitor, leaving you with an opportunity for a great shot...but no energy to make the shot. Pick your shots, and once you've got an enemy lined up, empty your gun capacitor at the enemy ship. Several neutron gun/mass driver volleys can destroy a Salthi and do serious damage to a Jalthis.

Speaking of Jalthis, you've been warned about the Jalthis in the lounge prior to this mission. Ignore the advice. Jalthis are relatively harmless so long as you stay out of their firing angles. They are slow, and they can't



turn very quickly. Get behind them and fire a few volleys to knock down their rear shields, then loose a heat seeker...and do it fast. Three Jalthis are quite enough to toast that Exeter if you don't move quickly.

You'll see a lone Jalthi on one side of the Exeter, and two on the other. Do not even bother telling Angel to break and attack—just afterburner



into the lone one, and loose your full guns as soon as you can, then follow it up with a missile (one should be locked by the time you've emptied your guns). Then afterburner over to the pair of Jalthis and do the same thing, but even better, ram one of them. Then you and Angel can destroy the third one, but, again, don't dawdle. If necessary, interpose



your ship between the Exeter and the Jalthi, then fire on the Jalthi to distract it, then get out of its way—you can only take one of those six-laser volleys.

GIMLE MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: Asteroids, 4 Dralthi just outside the asteroids, 2 Gratha near nav 3

Victory points: Nav 1 (1), nav 2 (3), nav 3 (3), any Grathas killed (3)

Victory point total for this mission: 10

Victory points required to win this mission: 9

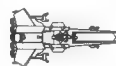
Possible medals: None

Your first flight in a Rapier. Be careful in the rocks that you see in the illustration, as the Rapier's speed can get you in trouble. Use full guns.

If you've only flown the winning path, then this mission will be your first brush with Grathas. Remember that Grathas have both mass drivers and lasers, as well as very heavy shielding. You can beat them, but only if you use the speed and armament of the Rapier.

Don't ever take on a Gratha head-to-head. He's got good guns and decent shields, so it's a matter of luck whether you burn his shields down before he burns yours down. In any case, you'll walk away from the encounter considerably damaged if you play chicken. Instead, use the afterburner slide, hitting the enemy initially from the side to slow it down, then zip around back and pound its exhaust tubes. Grathas are slow enough that I can usually get a hit with a dumb-fire missile, which won't kill it, but will cause severe damage. Set your velocity to about 370, however, or you'll end up ramming Grathas inadvertently, damaging yourself. (Ramming can be good, but only when you intend to do it.)

While you're working on one Gratha, listen for the distinctive *dunk-dunk-dunk* sound of mass drivers firing; that could be another Gratha zeroing in on your backside while you're distracted. Don't fly straight for any appreciable time, or the other Grathas in the area will be painting your silhouette on their cockpit sides.



Tiger's Claw



2 Gratha



4 Dralthis



Nav 2

GIMLE MISSION 3

Mission type: Patrol/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: Two waves of Dralthis: 5, then 4 (Dakhath included in the second wave)



Victory points: Each Dralthi is worth 1 point; the ace (Dakhath) is worth 5 points, but activating the second wave of Dralthis actually costs you 1 point.

Victory point total for this mission: 13

Victory points required to win this mission: 9

Possible medals: Bronze Star for 80 medal points

This mission claims to be a patrol, but the victory conditions clearly show that it's a strike mission. In reality, it's an easy medal. If you can't take nine Dralthi with a Raptor, then you'd best hang up your spurs, pardner. You can actually rack up more than half the victory points needed to win this series in this mission.

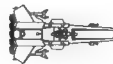
The trick of the mission is to get rid of Angel, so she doesn't accidentally kill you or steal all the Dralthis. Here's how to do it. First, autonav to nav 1. You'll drop out of autonav about 12,000 meters from the enemy ships. Immediately reset your navigational computer to return to the *Tiger's Claw*, and start heading back in that direction—don't give Angel a chance to start attacking the Dralthi. Once she's moving back towards the *Claw* with you, then you can tell her to return to base, and she'll do it; ask her any earlier, and she won't do it. Stop your ship and wait for



9 Dralthi



Nav 1



Tiger's Claw

her to leave—make sure she's gone. Then go after those Dralthi that, as you can see in the illustration, are waiting for you at Nav 1.

There is a tendency for one of the Dralthis to run, making it hard to rack up

the full 13 points. My suggestion is to leave Dakhath for last, as he's most likely to run away otherwise.

BRIMSTONE SERIES

You get to Brimstone either by messing up McAuliffe or by winning Gateway. If you got here from Gateway, then congratulations! If you got

here from McAuliffe, shame on you—go back and re-play the McAuliffe missions until you get them right. I'm serious here—if you can't get through McAuliffe, then you haven't got a prayer of finishing Rostov, and Secret Missions is out of the question.

You're flying with Maniac, which is somewhat like flying escort missions with an idiot escort. If you can keep him alive, then you're good. (Remember what Colonel Halcyon says: "If Maniac give you any trouble, you have my permission to shoot him out of the sky...and use guns, not missiles. Save the missiles for important targets.") If you can't keep Maniac alive, then don't worry about it. You also fly in a Scimitar, a mixed blessing but not a bad ship for these missions. All in all, this is not a bad series. There's some challenge, particularly in the third mission, but it's not as frustrating as Gateway's escort mission was.

There is no room for error in these missions, so victory points are irrelevant. You must complete every goal, or you'll lose this series, and have to battle your way back from Port Hedland.

Wingman: Maniac

Ship: Scimitar

Total possible victory points in this series: N/A

Victory points required to win this series: N/A

If you lose: You go to the Port Hedland series.

If you win: You go to the Dakota series.

BRIMSTONE MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

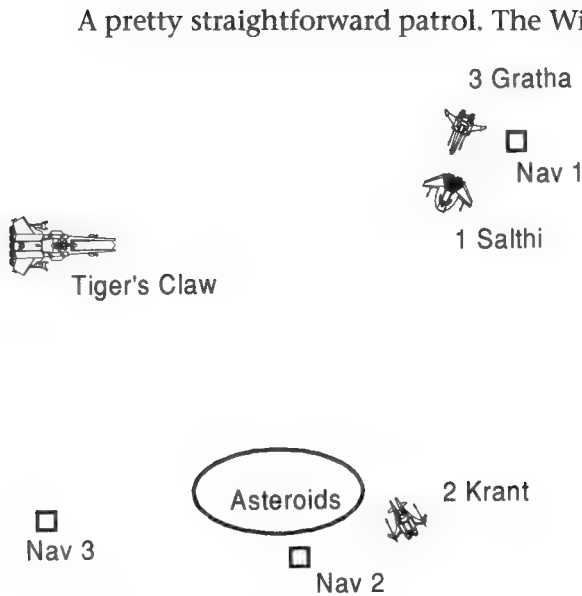
Enemies/obstacles: 1 Salthi, 3 Gratha, rocks, 2 Krant

Victory points: Hit all three nav points, land on *Tiger's Claw*

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: None



A pretty straightforward patrol. The Wing Commander writers seem determined to build these so-called “ambushes,” locations where there’s two waves: The first wave is just a single ship, which you kill easily, and then a second wave of several more powerful ships appear. That’s what happens in this mission. You see a lone Salthi, and once you’ve killed it three Gratha appear. They’re no big deal, however, and neither are the two Krants; for my money, it’s flying through the darned rocks that’s the worst part of

this mission, particularly in the Scimitar, which handles like a lead pig. Touch the nav points, and you win.

BRIMSTONE MISSION 2

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Salthi, 4 Dralhti, rocks

Goal: Safely escort Exeter

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: None

Not that tough a mission, and certainly simpler than the Gateway escort mission. The Scimitar’s mass drivers make zapping Salthis and Dralthis a simple matter, and those are the only enemies that you come across here.

It's important to destroy as many Salthis in the asteroids (see the illustration) as you can, because any remaining Salthis will attack the Exeter at nav 2. If necessary, back-track to the *Tiger's Claw* and keep going through the asteroids until you get all the Salthis. You prefer to destroy the Salthis in the asteroids because you don't have to worry about your escort ship yet. The Dralthis are simple too, if you arm your heat seekers and use them in combination with the mass drivers.



One thing not to do:
Don't fire at a Dralthis when the Exeter is right behind the Dralthis from your point of view. Any shots that you miss the Dralthis with will hit the Exeter, hastening its untimely demise.

BRIMSTONE MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2

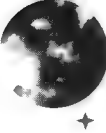
Jalthis, 2 waves of Krants: first 4 Krant (with Kilrathi ace Khajja), then 2 Krants and Dorkir

Goal: Destroy Dorkir

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A





Possible medals: Bronze Star for 90 medal points

A good, challenging mission. Taking out a Dorkir with just a Scimitar, when it's guarded by six Krants, including an ace, is some real work. Focus on Khajja first, as he's tough to kill. Use the missiles on him. Oh, and by the way—completely ignore what Iceman tells you in the lounge about how if all you've got is guns against a capital ship, then you might as well go home; he is dead wrong. I usually use my missiles against Khajja, then destroy the Dorkir with the mass drivers.

The hardest part of this mission is keeping Maniac alive.

CHENG-DU SERIES

If you're at Cheng-Du, you've got a serious problem, flyboy. If you've failed to complete the missions in Enyo and Gateway, then Cheng-Du is where you end up.

Having said that, Cheng-Du contains one of the best missions in the whole game—a Hornet defense mission that lets you destroy a Ralari. The downside of this series is Angel—you've got to fly with her.

From a winning-the-game-most-quickly point of view, you're actually better off losing this series; then all you must do to get to Venice is to win at Port Hedland and at Rostov. If you win Cheng-Du, then you've got to win in Brimstone, Dakota, and Kurasawa to get to Venice. Like many of the other losing track series, you have no room for error in this system. You must complete every goal in order to win the series.

Wingman: Angel

Ship: Hornet

Total possible victory points in this series: N/A

Victory points required to win this series: N/A

If you lose: You go to the Port Hedland series.

If you win: You go to the Brimstone series.

CHENG-DU MISSION 1

Mission type: Rendezvous/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krants, 2 Krants, Ralari

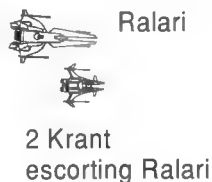
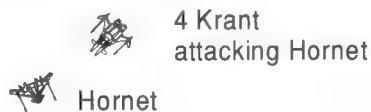
Goals: Safely escort Valkyrie, destroy Ralari, land on *Tiger's Claw*

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: Gold Star for 110 medal points

This mission is a lot of fun. Fly it and see. The only thing to watch out for is that the Ralari will not appear on your Nav Scan until after you've destroyed the Krants that are attacking Valkyrie. (It's included in the mission map.) Even then, you may have to wait around a bit for the Ralari to show up—so don't rush back to the *Tiger's Claw* after you've dispatched the four Krants, or the Ralari may never appear. Even when you fly this right, the Ralari sometimes doesn't appear. If that happens, just re-fly the mission. Worse, sometimes you can save Valkyrie, and destroy the Ralari, only to be told that the "fleabags got Valkyrie." I guess this mission is a bit buggy; it's understandable, as it probably didn't get too heavily debugged—Cheng-Du is, after all, an unlikely system to end up in. Further evidence that this behavior is a bug appears in that, when you run Cheng-Du under SM2.EXE rather than WC.EXE, the mission behaves as you'd expect that it would.



CHENG-DU MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 6 Dralhti, including ace Dakhath, 4 Salthi, asteroids

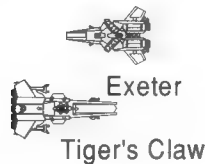
Goal: Safely escort Exeter

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

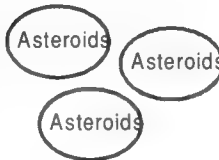
Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: Bronze Star for 83 medal points

Here you escort an Exeter through an asteroid field. I have no idea why the Tactical Operations boys have you fly an Exeter through an as-



5 Salthi attack while returning to Tiger's Claw



6 Dralhti Nav 1 attack Exeter

teroid field, but that's the mission, and it's your job to follow orders. This is one of several missions where you can meet Dakhath, and it's a shame that you don't get any points for killing him; but, then, in this series, there are no points, as you've got to do everything. Notice that you needn't kill Dakhath to win this mission, or the series.

If you think that running the Exeter through an asteroid field is a dumb idea, then you can just veer off to

the right of the asteroid field, fly for a while until you get past the asteroids, then autonav to the jump point at nav 1.

CHENG-DU MISSION 3

Mission type: Defend

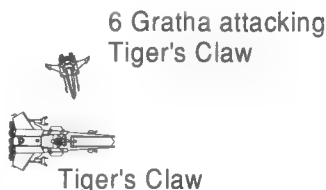
Enemies/obstacles: 6 Gratha

Goal: Keep *Tiger's Claw* alive

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: Silver Star for 75 medal points



Simple *Tiger's Claw* defense. Take your time, as those Gratha can't destroy the *Claw* quickly.

DAKOTA SERIES

Dakota is the fourth series in the "winning" track. You fly a Raptor, which is good, with Knight, which is bad. Knight not only doesn't always listen to orders, he's a lousy flier and a rotten fighter. Worse, when he does get himself in trouble (which is often), he then constantly screams over the intercom at you. I'm tempted to tell him to "maintain radio silence," but that does seem cruel. If he makes too much noise, just tell him to form on your wing, and then he'll stop dogfighting with enemy that will chew him up otherwise.

Dakota has a difficult escort mission (as if there were simple escort missions), a moderately difficult patrol mission, and a strike against transports guarded by a Jalthi ace. The missions are possible, but they're tough; for that reason, Dakota is one of the best series in Wing Commander I, perhaps the best overall. (What's its competition? Rostov, I'd say, but Rostov is impeded by the fact that you have to fly through a lot of asteroids, and, as I've said before, asteroids are just one of those busy-work kind of time-wasting obstacles that add difficulty only by adding tedium.)



Since you are almost certainly going to mess up Kurasawa, you're going to end up in Rostov anyway; that means, oddly enough, that it really doesn't matter whether you botch this series or not. But don't botch it—the missions are good.

Wingman: Knight

Ship: Raptor

Total possible victory points in this series: 67

Victory points required to win this series: 50

If you lose: You go to the Rostov series.

If you win: You go to the Kurasawa series.

DAKOTA MISSION 1

Mission type: Escort/Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Salthi, 3 Krant, 3 Jalthi

Victory points: Escort hospital ship Drayman to jump point successfully (5), rendezvous with vaccine ship and escort to *Tiger's Claw* (10), land on *Tiger's Claw* (2)

Victory point total for this mission: 17

Victory points required to win this mission: 17

Possible medals: Silver Star for 150 medal points

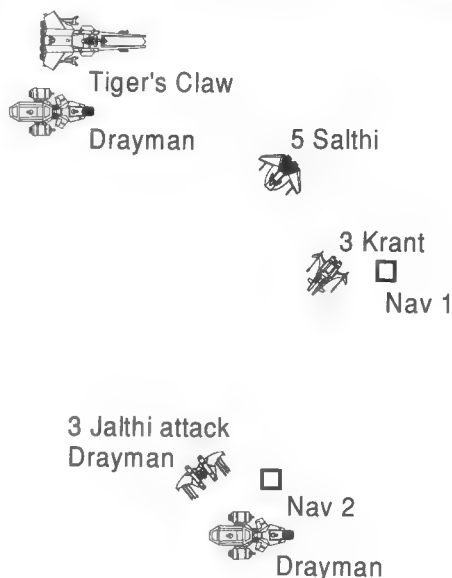
Quite a tough mission. Despite the fact that it is Jalthis that attack the second ship, and their guns are so lethal, I find that it's the first ship that is hard to keep in one piece. Go in with full guns enabled, use the afterburners, and strike the Salthis hard and fast. One gun capacitor's worth of dual guns should be able to destroy a Salthi from behind. Pick your shots, as there are five Salthis trying to destroy that hospital ship. Think to yourself, "one shot—one kill." Don't try to ram the Salthis; you need your armor for later, and besides they're too fast and agile. Then be sure to wait and let the Drayman's shields recharge fully before moving on to the jump point.

Another thing to keep in mind is that you needn't rush out to meet the Salthis; stay near the Drayman, and if you stay slow, then the lead Salthi stays in your sights for a longer period of time, making killing it easier.

At nav 1, keep the Krants busy, and you should be able to eliminate them before they destroy the hospital ship. The first Krant always seems tough. Again, move quickly and pick your shots. Only use the missiles if you've got a ship three-quarters dead, like that first Krant.

You'll meet the Jalthis before the hospital ship arrives. As always, try to delay getting near the nav point so as to give yourself more time to kill Jalthis before the Drayman arrives. This is where you must make the missiles count—go ahead and waste a few. If the Drayman is damaged at all by now, do not use the friend or foe missiles—they may lock onto the Drayman, if the damage occurred in its communications unit! Pound the Jalthis from behind with your guns, then finish them off with the missiles, or just plain ram them. You have about five seconds to take out the first Jalthi, or the other two will take out the Drayman. Taunt the first Jalthi as you afterburner in.

Move fast and move well, or all those plague-stricken colonists will die. And if you lose both transports, you're going to have to fly the remaining missions perfectly, or you're going to Rostov a little early.





DAKOTA MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Gratha, 4 Krant, followed by 2 Krant and a Ralari

Victory points: Touch nav 1, 2, 3, and land (2 points apiece); destroy Ralari (15)

Victory point total for this mission: 23

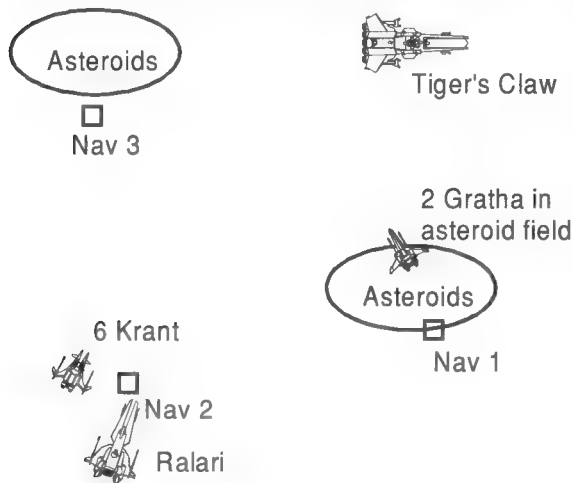
Victory points required to win this mission: 17

Possible medals: Silver Star for 105 medal points

This is called a patrol mission, but the fact that the majority of victory points comes from zapping the Ralari means that it's really a strike mission.

There are no rocks, so it's a simple patrol. Don't let the Ralari scare you; after all, it's got pretty weak guns, and no maneuverability to speak

of. Just kill its escort, and then destroy the capital ship with dual guns to the exhaust pipes. This is true of Fralthis as well; when I read in Joan's how much armor a Fralthis had, I dreaded meeting one. But take away their fighter escort, and Kilrathi capital ships in Wing Commander I are nothing really to worry about. (Now, Wing Commander II, that's another story...) Oh, and tell



Knight to "form on my wing," or he may get into the act of destroying the Ralari, and rob you of your medal points for it.



DAKOTA MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Krants and a Dorkir, 2 Jalthi (including ace Bakhtosh Redclaw) and a Dorkir, followed by another wave of 2 Jalthi

Victory points: First “tanker” Dorkir (5), both “transport” Dorkirs (10 apiece), landing on *Tiger’s Claw* (2)

Victory point total for this mission: 27

Victory points required to win this mission: 17

Possible medals: Gold Star for 135 medal points

I always find strike missions easier than escort missions. This one is loaded with victory points—more than half the points required to win the series—so fly well and leave no target undamaged.

Against the first Dorkir and the Krants, take your time. You’ll need your missiles for Bakhtosh, so save them: Bakhtosh Redclaw is by far the best-armored enemy ship that you will meet in this mission. His speed, armament, and extra “ace shielding” make him into a Ralari that’s all of a sudden grown fangs. Destroy Redclaw first, before doing anything else; you don’t dare turn your back on that buzzsaw-with-afterburners. Notice that unfortunately, you don’t get any victory points for your efforts with the ace; too bad.



If you’re wondering where the third Dorkir shown in the illustration comes from, it’s a surprise; Halcyon didn’t know about it when he briefed you, which is why you weren’t told to expect it.



PORT HEDLAND SERIES

If you're in Port Hedland, fly well: This is almost your last chance to win the war. If you lose here, you go to Hubble's Star, and it's not a pretty place. The Hubble's Star missions are killers, and you get to fly them in Scimitars.

Speaking of Scimitars, you're back on the flight deck with those slow-moving, flying battering rams for this mission. Even worse, you're flying with Knight.

There is some parallelism between Dakota and Port Hedland. The first Dakota mission was a difficult escort of two Draymans; in Port Hedland, you've only got one Drayman to defend, but you cannot allow it to be destroyed under any circumstances, or it's off to Hubble's Star for you—remember, this series offers no room for error. The second mission is a strike mission disguised as a patrol mission, as was the second mission at Dakota. This time, however, the capital ship that you “happen upon” is a Fralthi. The final mission is a combination of a *Tiger's Claw* defense from a bunch of Jalthis, including Bakhtosh Redclaw, followed by a strike on a capital ship, as was the final mission at Dakota. This time, however, it's a Fralthi that you'll hit.

Wingman: Knight

Ship: Scimitar

Total possible victory points in this series: N/A

Victory points required to win this series: N/A

If you lose: You go to the Hubble's Star series.

If you win: You go to the Rostov series.

PORT HEDLAND MISSION 1

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalthis, 3 Gratha

Goals: Safely escort Drayman back to *Tiger's Claw*

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: Bronze Star for 130 medal points

Those Jalthis will make mincemeat of the Drayman if you let them, so avoid hitting nav 1 for as long as you can; that way, you delay the Drayman's jumping in. Once the Jalthis are gone, make sure that the Drayman's shields have fully recharged before you go on. Remember to never fire at a Jalthis that has the Drayman right behind it from your point of view, as any shots that miss the Jalthis could hit the Drayman...and it doesn't take too many mass driver shots to eliminate a Drayman.

It does seem that the Kilrathi sent their least experienced pilots; these Gratha that you can see in the illustration are downright stupid. I found that I could get right behind one and fire mass drivers until it exploded. It's usually easy to kill all three Gratha before they even hit the Drayman.

Because the Gratha are piloted by inexperienced Kilrathi who seem intent on the attacking the transport, you can just point at the lead Gratha and fire at it as the wing of enemy fighters comes in; it won't even shoot back, and explodes in a gratifying fashion. The one right behind it may be stupid enough to ram you, so don't let it if your shield situation isn't good.



4 Jalthis attack on way to Drayman



3 Gratha attack during return trip



Tiger's Claw

PORT HEDLAND MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: Minefield, asteroids, 3 Dralthis, 4 Gratha, Fralthis



Goals: Hit all nav points and destroy Fralthi

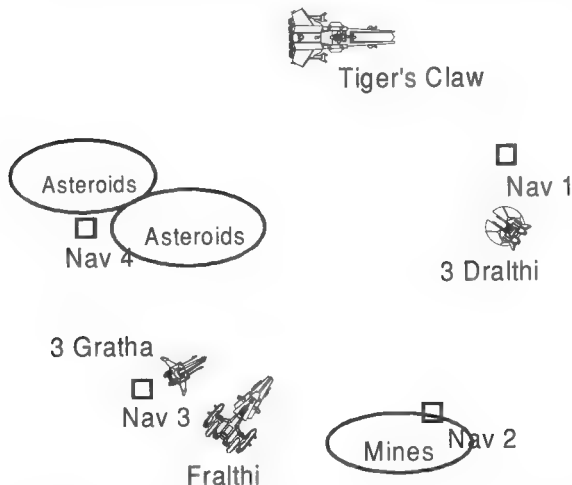
Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: Silver Star for 130 medal points

The worst part of this mission is that it's done in a Scimitar. Move through the mine field at top speed, dodging mines; never move through a mine field slowly, as their magnetic fields will attract them to your ship's hull. The combination of your Scimitar's mass drivers and strong shields, in combination with the Dralthis's lasers and weak shields, suggests strongly that a simple head-to-head confrontation may be the quickest way to eliminate the Dralthis. Then zip away with afterburners to recharge your guns and shields, and return to pick off the next Dralthis. You should get out of the minefields and past the Dralthis with your armor intact and no damaged systems.

Before going after the Fralthi, send Knight home—he'll take the order after you drop out of auto-nav when the Fralthi is barely visible on the radar.



With the Gratha escorting the Fralthi, you're basically dealing with a larger Scimitar: They're slow, clumsy, and equipped with mass drivers and lasers. Do not go head-to-head with a Gratha, unless it's an extremely dumb one, like the ones you met in the last mission. Instead, use the afterburner

slide to destroy them, and use your missiles to finish off damaged Grathas. If you're feeling lazy, try this: Taunt the Grathas early on, then they should loose all of their missiles at you at once. Dodge them, and the Gratha will have to use their guns to attack you. You should be able to then park off the tail of the Fralthi and unload mass drivers at it until

the Fralthi's flak guns wear down your shields; when that happens, just afterburner away, recharge, and come back in for another pass. It takes a while to destroy them, but don't worry about it: Fralthis really are not that dangerous.

Send Knight home as soon as he'll listen, or he won't survive this mission. If you insist on bringing him along, then tell him to "form on my wing" when he starts bellowing for help.

PORT HEDLAND MISSION 3

Mission type: Defend/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalthi, 4 Gratha, 4 Krant, Fralthi

Goals: Keep Exeter alive, destroy Fralthi

Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Victory points required to win this mission: N/A

Possible medals: Gold Star for 165 medal points

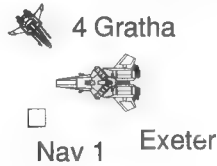
A long mission. First, you've got to defend the *Tiger's Claw* against a wing of Jalthis headed by ace Bakhtosh Redclaw. It sounds scary, but it's not. The *Claw* is practically indestructible, so take your time. Redclaw is so single-minded that he may actually let you destroy him from behind while he hammers the *Claw*. Then you've got to save an Exeter from a bunch of Gratha. For some reason, this Exeter seems tougher than some others—it doesn't die as easily, and if you work quickly, then you'll see the Exeter safe so that you can move along to the Fralthi. You've got a time limit to destroy the Fralthi—if you take too long, it jumps out-system.

First, at the *Claw*, destroy Redclaw first. Pound him with the mass drivers; no need to ram him, as you may need those shields later. Do not let him run away, or you'll just have to beat him again when you return to the *Claw* to land.

To attack the Fralthi, you of course must destroy its escort first. Don't get near the Fralthi, or you'll trigger its jump countdown. Stay about 10,000 meters away, and lock onto a Krant. Taunt it so it'll fly out to



meet you, then kill it. Taunt the escorts away one by one, and then you'll have less to deal with when you do go after the Fralthi. One de-



fender will probably refuse to chase you, but one Krant's not much of a challenge. Try to avoid using the missiles on the Krants, or you won't have them left for the Fralthi.



You really need the missiles for the Fralthi, because you've got to kill it quickly, before it jumps out. Attack from the rear, using everything you've got. Remember, however, not to fire while one of your missiles is in

flight, or you could shoot the missile down. Send Knight home before you move in on the Krants, so he doesn't rush in and scare the Fralthi off.

KURASAWA SERIES

This is the first series to employ the Rapier exclusively, so I suppose Origin felt the need to make this one tough, and they did indeed make it tough.

In fact, this is the final series on the winning track, because once you're in Venice, the game's over. No matter what you do in Venice, you've won. (You can actually eject from all four Venice missions and still win.) So I guess it's okay that Origin included the near-impossible Ralari mission. I do wish that the mission had been flown with a Raptor, rather than a Rapier, however, as the Raptor has better guns for close-in work, and stronger shields; I'll bet that I could finish Kurasawa 2 more quickly with a Raptor than a Rapier. I guess we'll never know, however.

Anyway, unless you're superhuman or very persistent, then you're going to lose this series, so have fun while you're doing it. Also, for all the

bellyaching that I've done (and that anybody who's played the game all the way through ends up doing), it's interesting to have at least one mission in the game that really "sets the bar high," testing your abilities. That's Kurasawa 2.

Wingman: Bossman

Ship: Rapier

Total possible victory points in this series: 50

Victory points required to win this series: 40

If you lose: You go to the Rostov series.

If you win: You go to the Venice series (you win the game).

KURASAWA MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

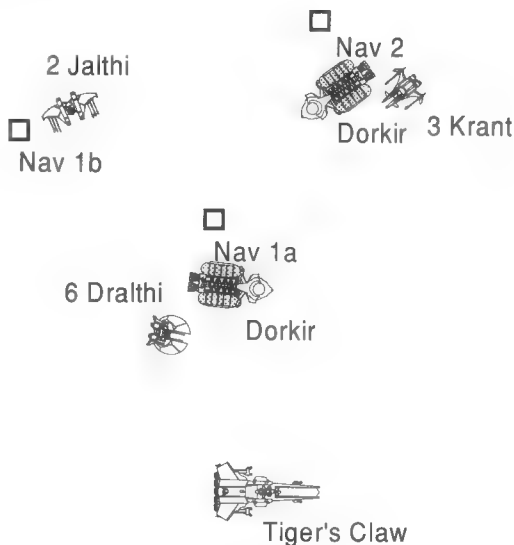
Enemies/obstacles: 6 Dralhti, Dorkir, 3 Krants, Dorkir, 2 Jalhti, Dorkir

Victory points: First Dorkir (10), second Dorkir (5), third Dorkir (5)

Victory point total for this mission: 20

Victory points required to win this mission: 20

Possible medals: None



A very simple mission. The Rapier's speed, agility, and shielding will make doing this mission a piece of cake.



KURASAWA MISSION 2

Mission type: Defend/Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Salthis, 4 Gratha, rocks

Victory points: Safely escort Ralari to *Tiger's Claw* (15)

Victory point total for this mission: 15

Victory points required to win this mission: 15

Possible medals: Silver Star for 98 kill points (about the most bogus medal in the whole game—you should at least get a Pewter Planet for completing this one)

Kurasawa 2 is the toughest mission in Wing Commander I. Once you appear near the Ralari, all four of those Gratha are pounding the Ralari hard, and you've probably got about 20 seconds, no more, to save the Ralari. How do you take out four Gratha in 20 seconds? Well, first of all, there is no sure-fire way to do it. But here are some techniques.

- 1** When you are fighting the Salthi in the asteroids that you see in the illustration, fire your friend-or-foe missiles. Get rid of them now, because if you fire them near the Ralari, they may lock onto it—after all, the missiles can't know that the Ralari is being piloted by ConFed crew. And make sure that you've got both guns engaged.
- 2** Once you come out of autonav, tell Bossman to break and attack, get up to max speed, and lean on the afterburners to get there as fast as possible.
- 3** Target one of the Gratha that are attacking the Ralari. I say to target one of the attackers because now and then a Gratha or two will just fly around, doing nothing. You want to target the ones that are actively firing. Lock your targeting computer on that ship, and start taunting it: Send the third message.
- 4** When you get within firing range of the first Gratha, you'll have a full gun capacitor. Use it. Empty the capacitor, and you'll probably destroy the first Gratha.

5 Now go after the second. Target it, and your image recognition missile will lock onto it fairly quickly. Don't wait for the missile before you fly towards the Gratha; it'll be locked by the time you get within firing range. Do not shoot the Gratha, hard as that may be, because you want a full capacitor before you fire again. Launch the missile at close range, and it'll hit the Gratha almost immediately. Ram the Gratha, and you'll knock down its shields even further. By now, your capacitors should be almost recharged. Fire both guns at the second Gratha, and it'll be dead.

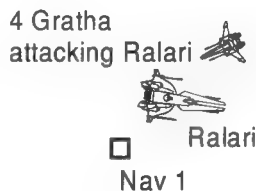


Tiger's Claw



4 Salthi in
asteroids

Now the odds are a little better—two on two. Boss-man's not the greatest wingman, but he's not the worst, either, so you should be able to take whichever ship he's not attacking. You've got two dumb-fire missiles left, so stick one up a Gratha's rear, being very careful not to fire it so that it can hit the Ralari!



No guarantees here, but that's the sequence of events that I've used on the occasions that I've succeeded in the Kurasawa 2 mission.

KURASAWA MISSION 3

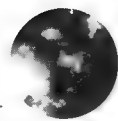
Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 6 Dralthi, 4 Krants

Victory points: Safely escort Exeter (15)

Victory point total for this mission: 15

Victory points required to win this mission: 15



Possible medals: None

When you get the briefing on this, it sounds like you're walking into



Tiger's Claw

4 Krant attack
Formidable en
route to Tiger's Claw



Nav 2

Mines



6 Dralhti



Formidable

another Kurasawa 2. After all, the Exeter and the Ralari are about the same size and power, so this is another no-win scenario, right? Fortunately, wrong. This is pretty simple, and it'll be particularly simple after you've played Kurasawa 2 a few dozen times and really honed your "get in there and kill the attackers fast" skills. Those Krants that you see in the illustration are a good sight easier to kill than Grathas, so you should really have no trouble with this at all. It doesn't matter

how well you fly this one, however, if you didn't save the Ralari. See you in Rostov.

ROSTOV SERIES

Most of us end up here, either by blowing Kurasawa 2 or by losing initially down to Cheng-Du and then fighting our way back from Port Hedland. If you lose this series, there's no more chances—it's off to Hell's Kitchen, and you've lost no matter how well you fly. If you win this series, you're at Venice with an automatic win.

Given its importance, it's a pretty reasonable series, in terms of difficulty. You can fail to destroy one of the three capital ships in this game, and still win the series.

You're back in the Raptor, my favorite Wing Commander I ship. Your wingman is Iceman, who's good but tends towards friendly fire—this guy

is eager to shoot the bad guys! Just let him run, and he'll probably be more help than trouble. There are no escort missions in this series, so there's not a reason in the world why you can't complete this series with victory points to spare.

There is one problem with this series, however: asteroids. They're everywhere, and every single mission includes them. Just grin and bear it.

Wingman: Iceman

Ship: Raptor

Total possible victory points in this series: 55

Victory points required to win this series: 40

If you lose: You go to the Hell's Kitchen series (you lose the game).

If you win: You go to the Venice series (you win the game).

ROSTOV MISSION 1

Mission type:

Patrol/Strike

Enemies/obstacles:

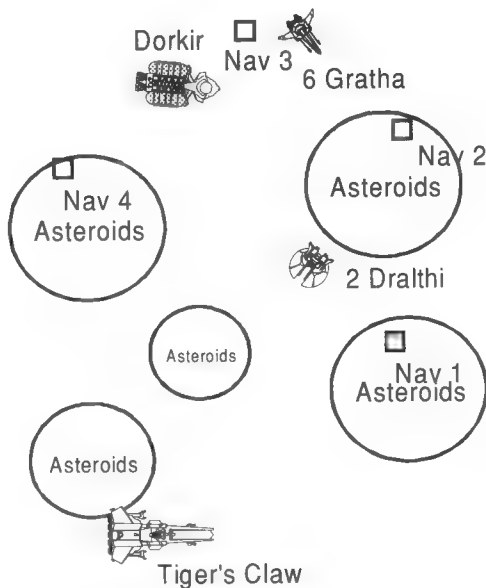
Lots of asteroids, 2 Dralhti (with Dakhath if he's still alive), 2 Gratha, then 4 Gratha and a Dorkir

Victory points: Four nav points (2 points each), Dorkir (10), completing mission (1)

Victory point total for this mission: 15

Victory points required to win this mission: 12

Possible medals: Bronze Star for 135 medal points





If you've gotten this far in the game, there's not much to tell you. Be careful in the rocks, don't play chicken with the Grathas (use the afterburner slide), and be sure to kill Dakhath if he's still around. If he's still alive, you'll see him at Venice—so space him now.

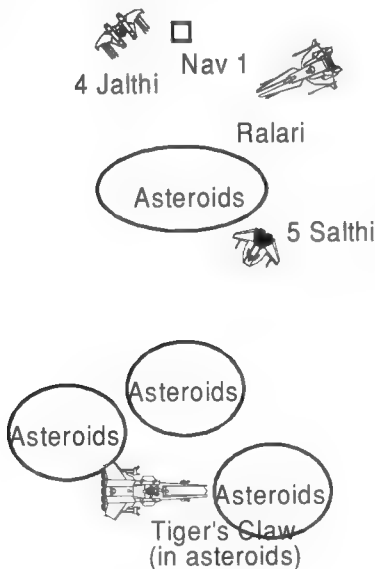
The Rostov missions are so simple, given that you can do them in a Raptor rather than the seemingly ubiquitous Scimitar, that the real challenge is in trying to get back to base without ship damage.

ROSTOV MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Salthi, 3 Salthi, 4 Jalthei, Ralari, asteroids

Victory points: Destroy Ralari (10)



Victory point total for this mission: 15

Victory points required to win this mission: 15

Possible medals: Silver Star for 113 medal points

Again, this would be challenging in a Hornet, but it's a piece of cake in a Raptor. Big challenge is in racking up the points without Ice-man's help, as the ships that he gets don't count towards your medal.

ROSTOV MISSION 3

Mission type: Patrol/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krants and a Fralathi, including Khajja the Fang (Kilrathi ace), 4 Dralathi

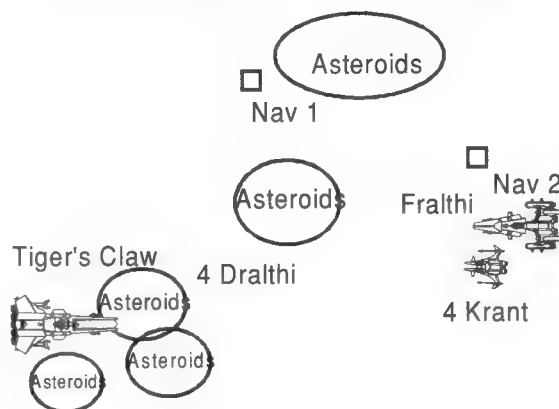
Victory points: Find Fralathi (15), destroy Fralathi (10)

Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: Gold Star for 120 kill points

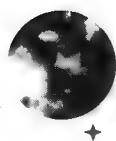
The victory points on this mission clearly show that this is a strike mission, not a patrol, no matter what the Nav Scan says. (Notice that the map looks like the mission should be a patrol.) Khajja is a decent challenge, but the armament on the Krant just isn't enough to make him that scary. The Fralathi will not jump out, at least not as far as I've seen, so take your time. And return to the *Tiger's Claw* via nav 1—do not go through the rocks unless you want to destroy the Dralathi; after all, they have nothing to do with your victory conditions, so there's no compelling reason to deal with extra asteroids.



The Fralathi is a weak enough sitting duck that it's hard to understand why you get a Gold Star for this mission, but you may as well take stars where you can get them.

HUBBLE'S STAR SERIES

If you're at Hubble's Star, you've got some flying to do. The missions are somewhat like Rostov or Kurasawa, but you've got to do them in a Scimitar.



Wingman: Knight

Total possible victory points in this series: 90

Victory points required to win this series: 65

If you lose: You go to the Rostov series.

If you win: You go to the Hell's Kitchen series.

HUBBLE'S STAR MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krants, a Ralari, 4 Dralthi (including ace Dakhath), 2 Dorkir

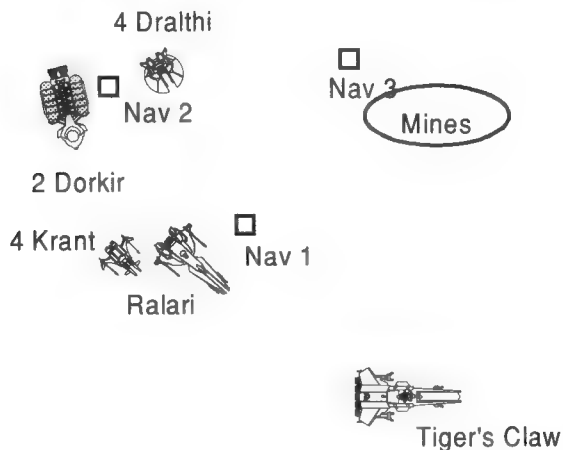
Victory points: Ralari (15), Dakhath (15), two Dorkirs at 10 apiece

Victory point total for this mission: 50

Victory points required to win this mission: 50

Possible medals: None

A tough mission, made tougher by the ship you've got to fly. The Scimitar handles worse and is more lightly equipped weapons-wise than



the Krants that it must face in this scenario. Even a Dralthi ace (assuming that Dakhath is still alive) is a challenge. Look to the victory points, and you can see what you've got to concentrate on. Lock onto Dakhath early, and pit your greater guns and roughly equal armor against his lasers for round one—just play chicken with him for the initial approach. You'll prob-

ably hurt him enough that he'll comment on it, and run away. Use your afterburners and don't let him go! Knock down his rear shields as he

runs away so that you can destroy him.

The good news in this mission is that if you fulfill all the goals of this mission, then you've made 50 of the 65 points that you need to get to Rostov... and a crack at winning. Play this mission over and over until you get all three capital ships and the ace. If the ace is already dead, then you get the points anyway.

HUBBLE'S STAR MISSION 2

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: Minefield, 4 Dralthis, 4 Gratha

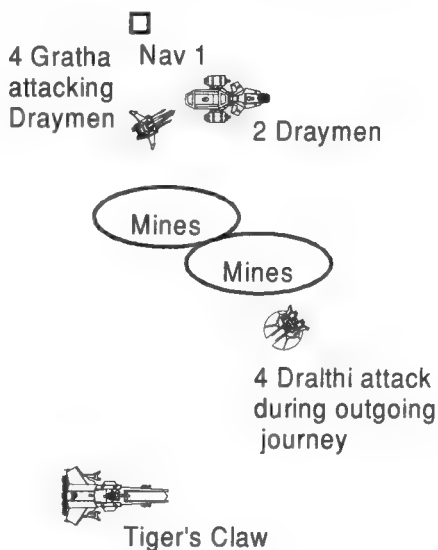
Victory points: Safely escort Draymen Alpha and Beta (10 each) to *Tiger's Claw*

Victory point total for this mission: 20

Victory points required to win this mission: 20

Possible medals: Bronze Star for 120 medal points

Good thing the first mission is possible; this one is rough. After battling your way through some Dralthis in the asteroids, you must destroy four Gratha before they destroy your two Draymen. This is very, very difficult, but if you fly it about a dozen times or so, you can get it done. There are no tricks, just good flying. And if you blow the mission, don't worry about it; you can fly a perfect mission 1 and mission 3 and still get to Rostov.





HUBBLE'S STAR MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike/Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Krants, asteroids, 4 Gratha, 2 Jalthei (including ace Bahktosh Redclaw)

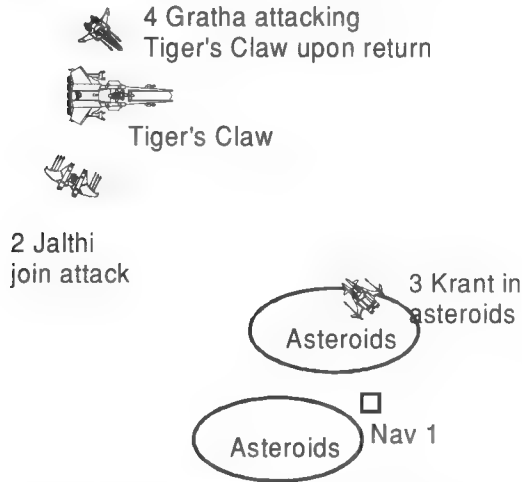
Victory points: 10 for saving the *Claw*, 10 for toasting Redclaw

Victory point total for this mission: 20

Victory points required to win this mission: 20

Possible medals: Silver Star for 110 medal points

A fairly simple *Tiger's Claw* defense, with a wild-goose chase thrown in. Basically, you run out to nav 1, where a strike force is supposed to be waiting. There are, instead, just three Krants. You've got to go through the rocks getting to and from nav 1, and when you return to the *Claw*, you find out where the main event is taking place—four Gratha are hammering the *Claw*. Your natural reaction may be to panic, and to zoom in as quickly as possible so as to save the *Claw*, but don't worry—remember, it's just about impossible to kill the *Claw*. Take your time, kill the Gratha, and then two Jalthei will appear. If you have not yet killed Redclaw, he



will be one of the pilots; killing him will get you 10 points, or you'll get the 10 points if you've already killed him. Add that to the 10 points you get for defending the *Claw*, and the 50 points you racked up in the first mission potting those capital ships, and you're at Rostov.

If not...well, you can always try again. And remember: Once you hurt Redclaw,

be prepared to chase him! He's a coward, and he'll run if he can. Stick to his back and fire the mass drivers right up his tail pipes. If you didn't

bring home either Drayman in mission 2, killing Redclaw is the only thing that will give you a chance to win the game.

VENICE SERIES

If you're here at Venice, then you have won the game.

Honest.

Anyone who's been following the story would never guess that Venice is an unimportant series, but it is. You can actually eject from all four missions, and the Kilrathi are still routed from Vega. If you take a look at the game map at the beginning of the chapter, you see that it's actually possible to eject from all the Enyo, Gateway, Cheng-Du, and Port Hedland missions, play the first and third mission at Hubble's Star perfectly (not a very hard thing to do), eject from the first Rostov mission, destroy the Ralari and the Fralthi in Rostovs 2 and 3, and eject from every single Venice mission, and still win the game. Just four missions will win Wing Commander I for you.

Anyway, about the series. You fly a Rapier, which is a nice ship, but you fly with Hunter, who's a major pain in the neck. He's very similar to Maniac, actually, and when he manages to space himself, try not to smile at the funeral.

Wingman: Hunter

Ship: Rapier

Total possible victory points in this series: N/A

Victory points required to win this series: N/A

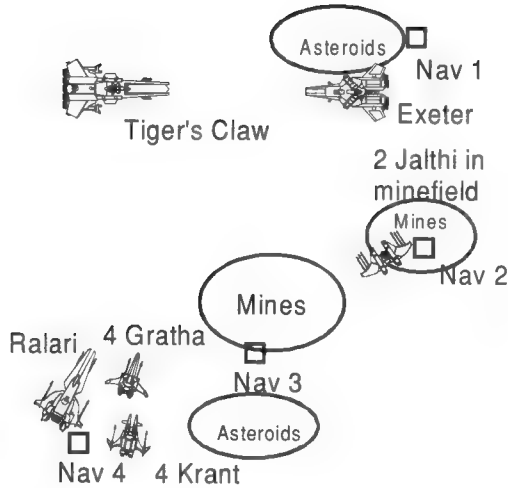
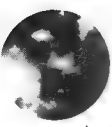
You cannot lose this series.

VENICE MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: Mines, 2 Jalathi, 4 Krants, including ace Khajja and a Ralari, 4 Gratha

Possible medals: Silver Star for 155 medal points



This looks like a lot of bogies, but the ship is more than a match for the array of bad guys that you see in the map. Just fly carefully, and you'll get that medal, unless Hunter steals enough kills to keep you from it.

VENICE MISSION 2

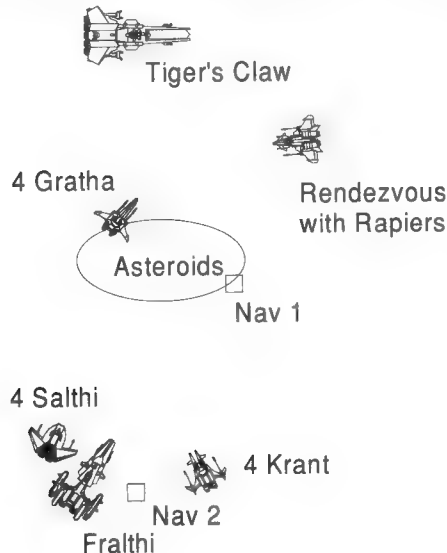
Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2

Gratha, 2 Gratha, 4 Salthi and Fralthi, 4 Krant, mines

Possible medals: None

Imagine—you can toast a Fralthi, splash its Salthi escort, take on 4 Krants, and 4 Gratha, and not get a medal! This is a simple strike mission. There are no tricks, just lots of bad guys to shoot out of space. These missions actually anticipate the Secret Missions, which unfortu-



nately contain a few missions that are supposed to be "challenging," but that are actually onerous: Having to defeat many enemies is part of making a challenging mission, but it's not the whole story. Again, I recommend ignoring the advice in the Lounge (hey, those guys have been drinking anyway, so what do you expect?) about using missiles on the Fralthi. I always destroy Fralthi with guns, and the

Rapier's got the second-best set of capital-ship killers (the Raptor has the best pair). Just eliminate the escort, then destroy the Fralthi. The Fralthi will not jump out, and you've got a fast, agile ship, so you don't even have to "tease" the escorts out to meet you—you can just zip in among them, strike, and zip out again to recharge your shields and guns.

VENICE MISSION 3

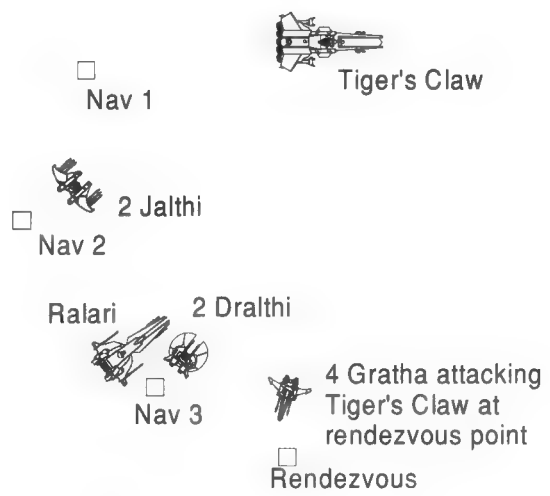
Mission type: Patrol/Strike/Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 2

Jalthi, mines, 2 Dralthi
(with Dakhath if he's still
alive) and a Ralari, 4
Gratha

Possible medals: None

Ostensibly, this is a patrol mission, but, as you can see in the illustration, you strike a Ralari capital ship and return to find the *Tiger's Claw* under heavy fire, so I guess it's a patrol/strike/defend mission. No tricks here, again: This is a "brute force" mission. Just fly well and kill the targets.



VENICE MISSION 4

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krants and a Fralthi, Starpost and 4 Gratha, 4 Jalthi, 4 Salthi, mines

Possible medals: Pewter Planet for 243 medal points (you've got to kill just about everything)

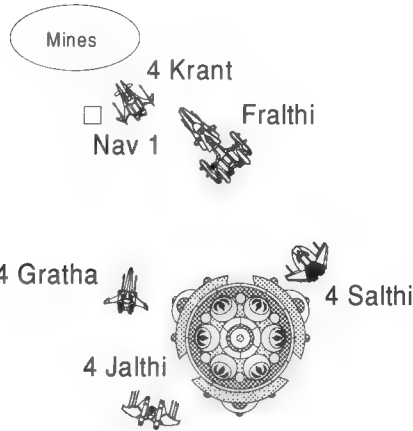


"History shall number you among the greatest heroes of humanity."

That's what Colonel Halcyon says when he pins the Terran Medal of Valor on you. The real challenge in this mission is not in destroying the



Tiger's Claw



Starpost—heck, that's nothing, really. The challenge is in getting the Terran Medal of Valor, or Pewter Planet. Here's how to do it.

First of all, ignore Halcyon when he tells you to bypass the Fralthi. Zap the Fralthi and its Krants. If it looks like Hunter is going for the Fralthi, tell him to form on your wing. Once you're in range of the Starpost, then tell him to go home before you engage any ships—he usually will, which would mean that 1)

you've managed to keep Hunter alive through this series and 2) you can rack up enough points to get the Planet. Enjoy it, as you can't save the game after you've gotten the Planet. Now relax for a day or two, before that dreadful communique arrives about Goddard Colony...but that's for Chapter 8.

HELL'S KITCHEN SERIES

Wingman: Hunter

Ship: Scimitar

You can't win this series; once you're here, you've lost the game.

I'm not sure why you'd want to play this series, save for the flying practice. Even there, the series lacks: You are doomed to lose the first

mission no matter what happens. (At some point, the Drayman just spontaneously combusts, with no enemies around at all. *Grrr....*)

HELL'S KITCHEN MISSION 1

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Salthis, 3 and then 2 Krants (including Khajja), 3 Gratha

Possible medals: None

You've got to escort a Drayman full of civilian refugees from Cheng-Du (which you probably lost, if you're here) from nav 1 to the *Claw*. First, you meet four Salthis. They're no big deal, but when one runs, don't chase it and waste afterburner fuel. Instead, go back to the *Claw*, and then return to nav 1; the Salthis will reappear, and you can kill it without throwing away that precious afterburner fuel.

Then you face two wings of Krants, the second one composed only of two Krants, but one of the Krants is Khajja the Fang. When fighting Khajja in a Rapier (as you would in Venice), he's no big deal. But against him in a Scimitar...well, he's only one of two enemy left, so put everything you've got into blasting him, or, if you're truly diabolical, tell Hunter to keep him busy while you zap the other Krant, then come around for Khajja. Who knows, Hunter might even still be alive by the time you return to help him...but I doubt it.



Tiger's Claw



4 Salthis



3 Gratha attack Drayman after rendezvous



Nav 1



5 Krant



Drayman



As with many other rendezvous missions, the Drayman doesn't appear until after you get to nav 1, so you can often zap or rout all the first Krant wing before the Drayman appears by avoiding nav 1. The Krants are stupid or cocky enough that they'll bore right at you when they first attack, so you should be able to feed the lead Krant enough mass driver shots to blow it up—but you may have to dodge his incoming laser bolts.

Once you've blasted the second wing of Krants, make sure you've rendezvoused with the Drayman—wait for it to hail you—wait for its shields to recharge fully, and head on home. You'll then meet three Gratha. If you've been good about conserving your missiles, they you should be able to avoid a repeat of Hubble's Star 2.

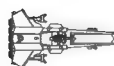
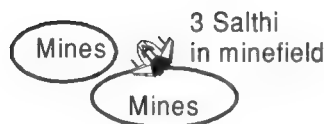
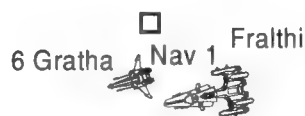
Here's the bad news about this mission: You lose the Drayman no matter what happens.

HELL'S KITCHEN MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: Mines, 3 Salthi, including Bhurak Starkiller, 4 Gratha and a Fralthi, and 2 Gratha

Possible medals: Gold Star for 161 kill points



Tiger's Claw

Your basic Fralthi strike. Focus on killing Bhurak, or you'll have to deal with him in the last mission. Use the afterburners; you won't miss them much, as you're only going up against Gratha, and they're not too fast. Remember to move quickly through the minefield that you see here; if an opening appears, afterburner through



it. And be prepared to meet any Salthis you didn't get the first time when you return to the *Claw*.

HELL'S KITCHEN MISSION 3

Mission type: Defend

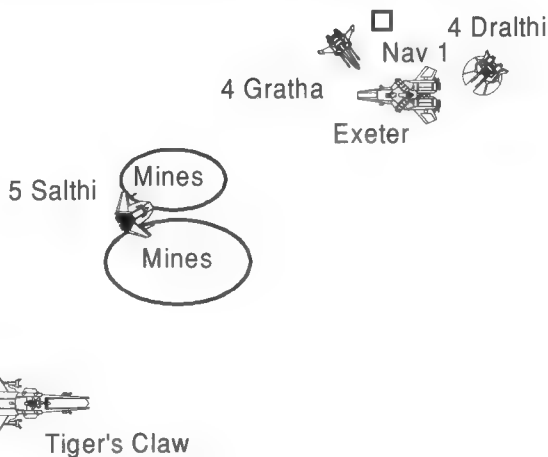
Enemies/obstacles: 5 Salthis, 4 Dralthis (including Dakhath), 4 Gratha

Possible medals: None

Another mission to defend an Exeter, but this one's possible to win (if you can actually win anything at Hell's Kitchen). First, you'll meet some Salthis in the mines. No matter what Halcyon says, you should chase the Salthis—it won't count against you. Then swoop in and destroy the Dralthis that are attacking the Exeter. I suggest that you take out one of the Dralthis that Dakhath is not flying first, as he'll take a minute or two to destroy, and you don't want three undistracted Dralthis pounding at the Exeter. The second Dralthis to take out would then be Dakhath's

Dralthis (this is assuming that he's still alive by now, which is unlikely anyway), then kill the third Dralthis. But by now the Exeter needs a rest, so see if you can rout the last Dralthis—hit enough to nearly destroy it, but not enough to completely destroy it. That way, it will run away, giving you a minute's breathing room before the four Gratha appear. They appear from about 15,000 me-

ters away, so you can afterburner out and meet them, probably killing two before they get within firing range of the Exeter. Then blast the last two, and you're done. As always, move quickly through the mine fields.





HELL'S KITCHEN MISSION 4

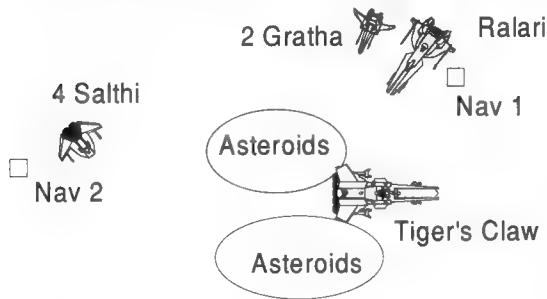
Mission type: Patrol/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Gratha and a Ralari, asteroids, 4 Salthi, 5 Dralthi, mines, 3 Jalthi, mines; any remaining aces fly with their wings (Bhurak with the Salthi, Dakhath with the Dralthis, etc.)

Possible medals: None

This is a grand-finale mission. There is a chance that the *Tiger's Claw* may have jumped by the time that you get to the rendezvous point, and

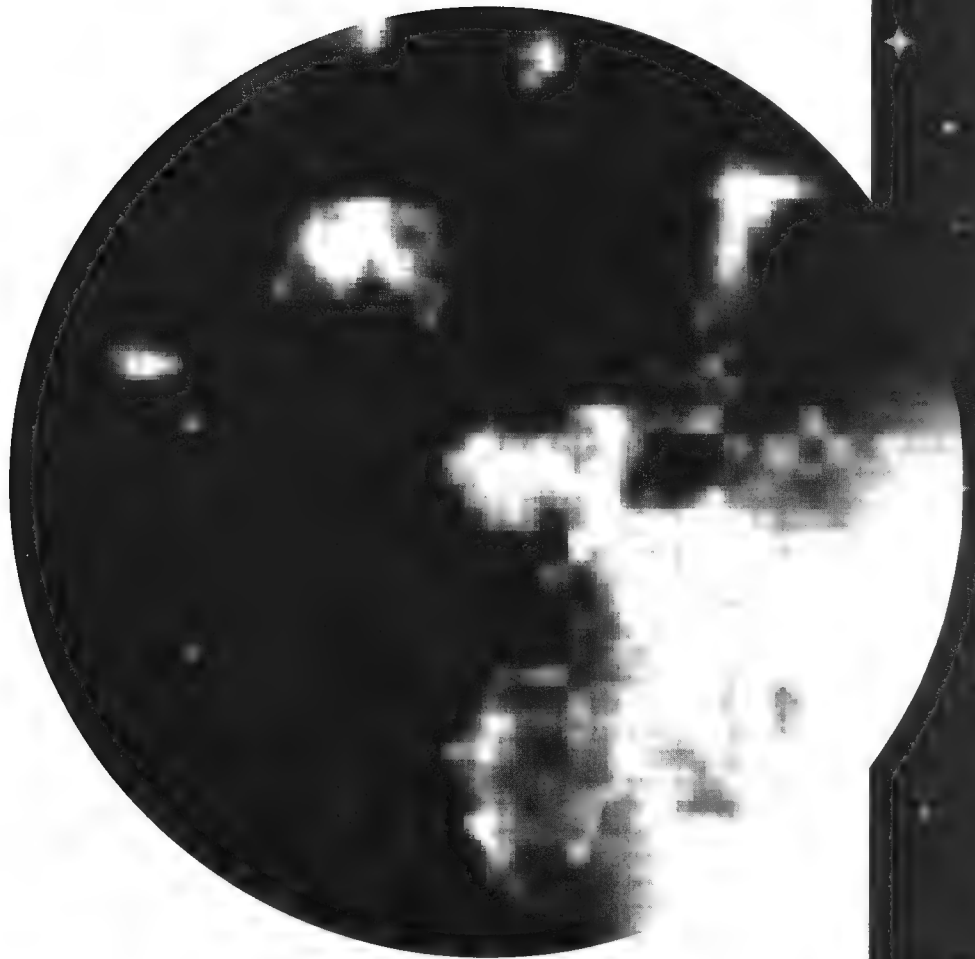
it's a long walk back home, so fly well.



Once you've finished Hell's Kitchen, pat yourself on the back for having done well against overwhelming odds, and go re-play Rostov so that you've got a game saved in the Venice system.

You'll need a game save from Venice in order to transfer your character over to Secret Missions 1. (Well, you could cheat and use the transfer program to transfer a character to Venice, then transfer that character to Secret Missions 1, but it wouldn't be as satisfying as would be getting to Venice the hard way.)

**THE MISSIONS
OF SECRET
MISSIONS 1**



E I G H T

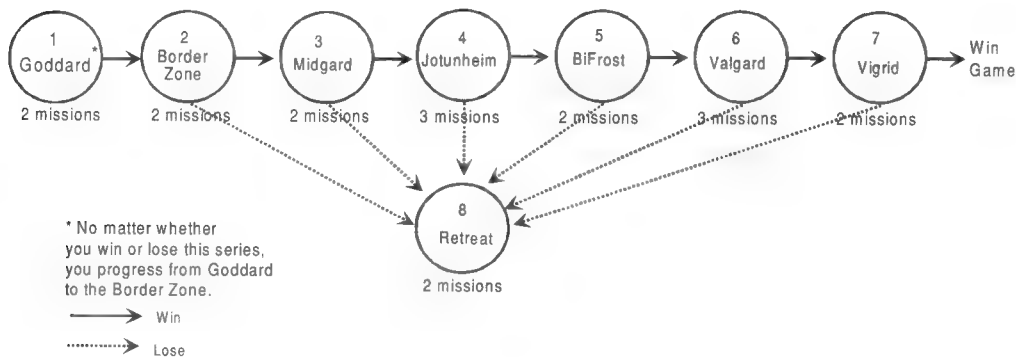


Wing Commander's popularity led Origin to test-market an add-on to the Vega Campaign called "the Secret Missions." Origin printed 10,000 copies of the Secret Missions, thinking that there would be no more interest than that. Getting 100,000 orders was, then, quite a surprise!

While Secret Missions 1 does not offer the interesting game tree that Wing Commander offers, Secret Missions 1 includes some terrific missions, including one of the toughest rendezvous missions in the whole series. It's well worthwhile playing.

GAME OVERVIEW

In Secret Missions 1, the *Tiger's Claw* receives orders to rush to the Goddard Colony, in Deneb, to investigate a distress call. When the *Claw* arrives, it finds that the entire planet contains nothing but wreckage. Later study finds that the Kilrathi destroyed the colony with just a single blast from a new warship, the *Sivar*. The *Tiger's Claw* is instructed to follow the *Sivar* deep into Kilrathi space, and to destroy it...or die trying.





The general tone of Secret Missions 1 is a continuation of the Wing Commander I missions, except that everything is more difficult. You get a mission much like Venice 4, but you don't get to destroy the starpost with a Rapier—you've got to do it with a Scimitar.

The game map looks like the illustration shown here.

Notice how linear the game is—blow one series, and you're sent to the Retreat series, which is an automatic loss, like Hell's Kitchen in the last game. Notice also that there are two missions in each series, rather than the three or four that you saw in Wing Commander I.

GODDARD SERIES

This is actually en route to the Goddard system. The *Tiger's Claw* has received a coded distress call from HQ to rush to the Goddard Colony, in Deneb, to assist them, as they've been attacked by some new Kilrathi weapon.

In the lounge, you talk to Iceman and Bossman, who talk of the mysterious jumps that the *Tiger's Claw* is making. Bossman tells you an old story about the *Gwenhyvar*, an Exeter-class ship that was supposedly captured by the Kilrathi intact, fighter complement and all. The Kilrathi use it to lure pilots into traps, Bossman says; Iceman says it's all a fairy tale.

En route to Goddard, you'll fly a Hornet for the two kinds of missions that the Hornet is specifically not built for—an escort and a strike. Complaining aside, they're fun missions because they're so challenging. The down-side to these missions is that you've got to fly them with Hunter, who remains, as he would no doubt say, "a real pain in the back-side, mate."

If you can't manage these missions, however, don't worry too much about it: These missions only set you up for the rest of the game. You can eject from both missions, and still move on to the next series, Border Zone.

Ship: Hornet

Wingman: Hunter

You cannot lose this series; you will go to Border Zone no matter what you do.

GODDARD MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike/Defend/Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: Rocks, 4 Salthi and a Lumbari, 2 Salthi, 3 Krants, 3 Krants, 3 Salthis

Possible medals: None

In this mission, you're up against the 16 enemy ships that you see in the map, you must destroy an enemy capital ship (a "Lumbari"), defend a friendly capital ship (a "Diligent"), and escort a Venture back to the *Tiger's Claw*—and you've got to do this all in a Hornet! (Don't worry; it just gets tougher from here on in.)

Complaining aside, this mission is possible, and in fact is one of my favorite missions in the Wing Commander universe. Play it a lot until you get it perfect. As near as I can tell, the Diligent is a slightly modified Drayman; it seems to have greater cargo capacity, but then it's never explained to us. It hardly matters, however, as a Diligent only appears in this one mission. The other new transport that appears in this mission, however—the Lumbari—does show up a fair amount from now on. It appears to have the same fighting and flying characteristics as the Dorkir, but a larger cargo hold and bridge. I think the only reason that Origin threw in the Lumbari was to provide a little bit of variety.

The escort parts of the mission are, as always, difficult, but for a change, it's the strike part—destroying the Lumbari—that's that hardest part. You see, it's escorted by a bunch of Salthis, and they take time to destroy—but the Lumbari jumps out after a short time. You just don't have enough time to destroy the Lumbari if you wait until after you've destroyed all the Salthis.

To win this, you've got to 1) take out the Lumbari without throwing away all your afterburner fuel, and 2) not get killed by some Salthi ramming you.

Here's one approach: Once you approach nav 1, activate target computer and start pulsing the afterburner to get you to the Lumbari, fast. Once it's at 7000 meters, stop afterburner and start firing. Keep coming right at it to about 1500 meters, then hit it in the face with a dumb-fire missile, and it should go up. Then just dogfight with the Salthis, using



ABs only to avoid volleys. Do not chase Salthis; you can always go back to the *Tiger's Claw* and back to reactivate Salthis, as you did in the last game.

Proceed to nav 2, but as soon as you drop out of autonav, turn back toward the *Tiger's Claw* to avoid the rocks. The second group of Salthis, the ones in the asteroids, will follow you (you needn't afterburner), and you can pick them off at your leisure. I would proceed directly to nav 3, before going to nav 2, and then zap the Krants, which hang around for quite some time before the Venture appears; what I'm saying here is to go rendezvous with the Venture before you go for the Diligent. Also, the Venture is a bit tougher than the Diligent, so it's a better starter—you've got a better chance of saving it. Do not use any missiles, as you'd like to save your heat-seekers for the Krants at nav 2. Eliminate the Krants at nav 3; the Venture will jump in, then go back to nav 2 for the tougher defense: the Diligent. Afterburner in, harass the Krants, ram them, do whatever you can—just take 'em out quick. The first one is the most important; after that, you can take whichever one Hunter isn't attacking, as



there are only three of them. Finish yours off, then kill the one that Hunter's dancing with (he usually can't manage to kill it). The Salthis on the return leg aren't all that bad, so long as you've been pulsing your afterburner and have some left. Again, don't chase any Salthis that run away; it isn't worth it, you haven't got the ABs.

After the mission, Shot-glass tells you about his cousin Zach and his family

living on Goddard, and how he hopes that they're okay. A quarter of a million colonists is a lot of people, he says.

GODDARD MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Krant, 2 Gratha, 4 Salthi and a Lumbari, 2 Krant and a Dorkir

Victory points: N/A

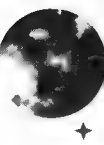
Victory point total for this mission: N/A

Possible medals: Silver Star for 117 medal points

A very similar mission to the previous one: lots of bad guys against you and Hunter in Hornets. As before, the capital ships will jump out if you don't move fast. Take your time with the Krants, as you'll have to be fresh and charged up shields and guns-wise to take out the Gratha quickly; if you don't take them out quickly, then Hunter will probably die. Attack the Lumbari as you did last time—move in quick, knock down its forward shields, then give it a dumb-fire right in the face. You might send Hunter home after nav 2, as he might listen to you, and so could live. Same drill again with the Dorkir, although it may require a few passes to destroy.

Afterward, you see the scenes of destruction and twisted wreckage on Goddard. Only a cowardly race would stoop to wholesale slaughter of civilians. There must be reparation for this senseless act! (If you're not steamed up about this yet, just imagine how the Admiral is rubbing his paws together, chuckling gleefully over Goddard. If you're still not steamed up, you should go get your willing suspension of disbelief checked.)





BORDER ZONE SERIES

Once the scenes of destruction have been received by the *Tiger's Claw*, HQ tells Halcyon to find the weapon that destroyed Goddard, and destroy it. That means you'll be heading deep into Kilrathi space, possibly on a suicide mission. Maniac, who's never been too stable to begin with, has begun having nightmares about this planet-killing device that we know so little about. Throughout this game, you'll talk to a number of pilots who are feeling very gloomy about this whole mission. Some claim that it's a suicide mission, and the *Tiger's Claw* isn't supposed to make it back.

Meanwhile, Shotglass has convinced himself that perhaps his cousin Zach was taken prisoner by the Kilrathi; perhaps he is still alive after all. It's a bad week for friends and family of *Claw* crew, as you find out also that Spirit has a fiancée named Phillip who has disappeared after a Kilrathi raid on Epsilon station where he works, in another sector.

The first mission here is a strike against a Fralathi, a fairly simple mission that includes a dual defense of the *Tiger's Claw*. The second mission is a tough escort (as if there are any easy escorts, right?) of two Drayman troop transports. Most players lose one Drayman; even though Halcyon bawls you out for it, you'll still stay on the winning track. You must safely escort at least one Drayman, or the game's lost.

Ship: Raptor

Wingman: Angel

To win this series: You must safely escort at least one Drayman in mission 2.

If you lose: You go to the Retreat series.

If you win: You go to the Midgard series.

BORDER ZONE MISSION 1

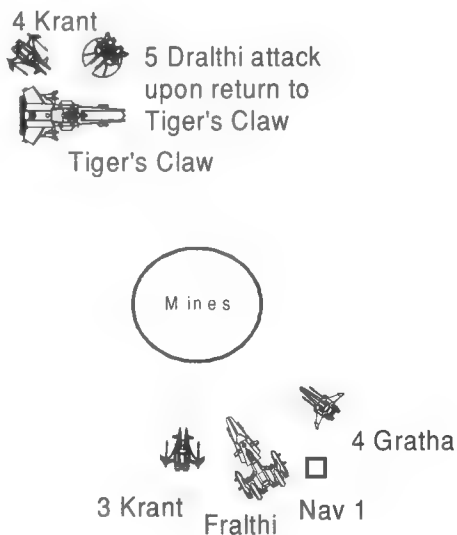
Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krant, 4 Gratha and Fralathi, 3 Krant, 5 Dralathi, mines

Victory points: N/A

Possible medals: None

There are no tricks here, just good flying. Don't worry too much about the *Tiger's Claw* against the Krants or the Dralhti; as you know by now, it's pretty tough, and the day's never come that a pack of Dralthis could destroy the *Claw* before you could route them—even while flying a Drayman, for goodness' sake. Take your time defending the *Claw* and don't waste afterburner fuel save to avoid enemy fire (remember, short bursts of afterburner fuel still makes you fast, but doesn't cost so much fuel.) Many of the Dralhti will run away, but you can loop back and forth between the *Claw* and nav 1, giving them a chance to return.



Afterward, Paladin begins worrying that to beat the Kilrathi, we'll have to commit genocide, and that'll make us no better than them.

BORDER ZONE MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Krant, 3 Jalhti, 3 Gratha, 2 Krant

Goals: Keep at least one Drayman alive

Possible medals: None

Remember when in a Raptor that you've got some fantastically destructive guns, but they've got short range, and they chew up energy. That means that you should always keep full guns enabled, close with the

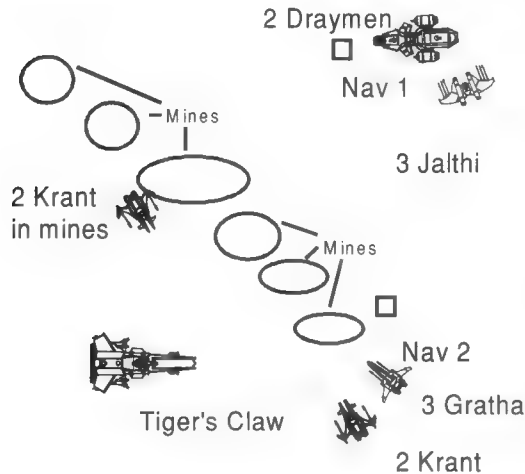


enemy to a distance of under 3000 meters, and be sure to pick your shots. Don't just spray fire around, like you can do in a Hornet. Pick your shots, and you can destroy a Krant by just unloading an entire gun capacitor at it. Recharge your guns before moving on to the next target, if you can afford the time. Remember that your capacitor recharges a lot faster from a quarter-power position than it does from an empty position, so it's usually not a good idea to run those capacitors on empty.

Take the minefield quickly, as always. Afterburner in and hit the first Jalthi from behind; empty your gun capacitors at its back, and you'll destroy it. The second one will still be lining up to fire on the Draymen, so do the same to that Jalthi. The third one will still be some distance off, so rush out and blast that one before it even gets in firing range of the Draymen. If either Drayman was damaged, wait for its shields to regenerate before autonavving.

Also, the game can be a bit stupid about whether or not you actually rendezvoused with both Draymen. Fly within 1500 meters of each Dray-

man, or you'll end up leaving one behind, "lost" according to your mission report. You'll probably have to wait a while at nav 2 for the Draymen, but it's important that you wait and see them jump out. If you saw two Draymen jump, but the game says that you only got one off, don't worry about it—it's just a game bug; you did your job.



After the mission, Halcyon will assign you to a Scimitar. That's usually a rebuke, but don't take it that way—the Scimitar is the ship for the next series on the winning track.

MIDGARD SERIES

You press further into Kilrathi space, pursuing the enemy convoy escorting the secret weapon. You find out that the cats have captured the Falstaff, a Drayman transport containing important encrypted intelligence data and, supposedly, some hostages. The intelligence data cannot be allowed to get back to Kilrathi HQ, as they can crack its codes there. That means that you'll have to run out and destroy the Drayman...even if it does perhaps contain humans. Shotglass thinks that Zach may be on the transport.

Meanwhile, our side has captured an enemy Dralhti, and you've got to escort it into the *Tiger's Claw*. This is the most difficult escort mission in all of the games, mainly because the ship that you're escorting is so weak.

Fortunately, however, you needn't complete most of this series in order to win the series. If you destroy both the Ralari and the Drayman in the first mission—which shouldn't be too hard for a veteran of the Vega campaign like yourself—then all you have to do in the second mission is to destroy the Ralari that you meet en route to the captured Dralhti, then go to nav 3 and home from there—that'll rack you up enough points to win the series. See the mission write-up for other options.

Ship: Scimitar

Wingman: Bossman

Total possible victory points in this series: 50

Victory points required to win this series: 35

If you lose: You go to the Retreat series.

If you win: You go to the Jotunheim series.

MIDGARD MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Jalhti, 4 Krant and enemy Drayman, 2 Salthi and Ralari

Victory points: Destroy the Drayman (20), destroy the Ralari (5)



Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 20



Tiger's Claw

2 Jalathi attack on
the way to Nav 1



2 Salthi



Nav 2

Ralari

4 Krant



Drayman



Nav 1

Possible medals: None

This is a pretty straightforward strike mission, except that it's in a Scimitar. There's really no tricks here. Just make sure that you get both the Drayman and the Ralari, and that way you've got some leeway for the next mission.

MIDGARD MISSION 2

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Gratha and Ralari, 3 Dralhti, 4 Dralhti and Fralhti, 5 Dralhti, 4 Jalathi and 2 Fralhti

Victory points: Safely escort Dralhti to *Tiger's Claw* (10), destroy Ralari (5), touch nav 3 (5), destroy both of the second group of Fralthis (5)

Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: None

Looking at the mission map gives you an idea of the difficulty of this mission. Saving the Dralhti by following your navigational computer's lead is just about impossible. Even if you can kill off the enemy who are trying to destroy the Dralhti, howtheheck do you destroy two Fralhti without one of them zapping the Dralhti? Note the victory conditions for this mission: After getting the Dralhti, go back to nav 3 and then turn

around and go back to nav 1 and destroy the two Fralthi. I've at least been able to save the Ralari in Kurasawa 2 a few times, but I've never been able to fulfill all the mission objectives in Midgard 2. Having said that, however...

Assuming that you've killed the Drayman and the Ralari in the previous mission, how can you win the series?

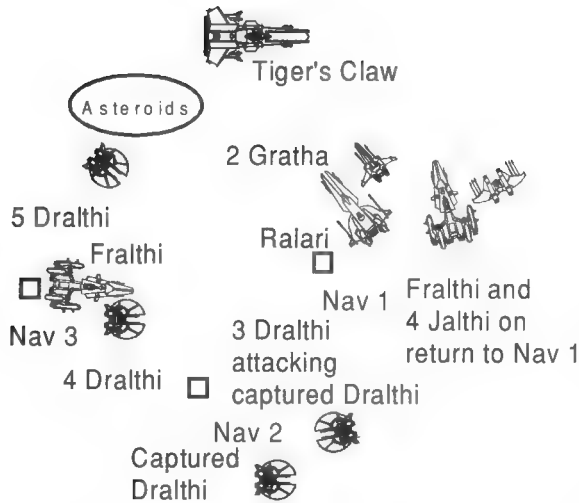
First of all, you've got to get rid of the Ralari. It's pretty straightforward—it's only escorted by two Grathas, and it won't jump out on you—but be sure to 1) not sustain any damage, 2) use a minimum of afterburners, and 3) don't use any missiles. If you can't do that, then eject and try the mission again. That will give you five of the 10 points that you'll need in order to win this series. How do you get the rest? Here's several suggestions.

Method 1: the simplest way. Once you've eliminated the Ralari, autonav to nav 2, where the Dralhti is waiting. Ignore it, and apply full afterburners to get to nav 2. Then turn and apply full afterburners to fly towards nav 3, until you're out of range, and can autonav to nav 3. The Dralhti will not follow you, at least you won't see him on the cinematic autonav sequence. Once you're out of autonav, you'll have to keep on the afterburners to nav 3, then turn and afterburner to the *Tiger's Claw*. Even though you haven't seen anything of the Dralhti except when you whizzed by it on afterburners, you'll report that you brought the Dralhti back, and it's on to Jotunheim.

Method 2: Rendezvous with the Dralhti and eliminate the enemy Dralhti around nav 2 that are trying to destroy it. (Be careful who you shoot at!) Then reset your nav computer for nav 1, and when you drop out of autonav, you'll see two Fralthis and a fighter escort. Reset the nav computer to vector you to the *Tiger's Claw*, then lean on the afterburners back to the *Claw*. Again, you'll get credit for leading the Dralhti home.

If you see Spirit and Knight in the lounge, then you know that you're in Jotunheim; if you see Spirit and Angel, then you know that you've failed.

Method 3: a lot of work, but it makes it possible to rack up lots of points and still bring in the Dralhti. First, take out the Ralari and return to the *Tiger's Claw*. Then go to nav 3; you'll meet five Dralhti on the



way—destroy them—and four more before you actually get to nav 3. You'll meet a Fralthi unescorted at nav 3, so destroy that next. Then go back to the *Tiger's Claw*, and from there back to nav 1, where you'll find two Fralthis and a three-Jalthi escort. Blast them, and now go on to nav 2, where there are only three Dralthis attacking your Dralthi. Get rid of them, and then you can re-

turn unassailed to the *Tiger's Claw*. This is the only way that I've ever been able to win this mission's full 25 points.

JOTUNHEIM SERIES

More of the same, as you continue to fight your way into Kilrathi territory. There are three missions in this series, but only the first two count—the third mission, the Gwennyvar mission, actually is of no value in winning the game.

You're in a Raptor with Spirit, and, as always, she flies fairly well, and takes orders without question. Send her home as soon as you can, so she can worry about Phillip in peace.

Ship: Raptor

Wingman: Spirit

Total possible victory points in this series: 35

Victory points required to win this series: 27

If you lose: You go to the Retreat series.

If you win: You go to the Bifrost series.



JOTUNHEIM MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike/Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 6 Salthi and Fralthi, 4 Gratha, 4 Krant, then 3 Krant

Victory points: Destroy Fralthi (5), save Drayman (5), touch nav 2 (2)

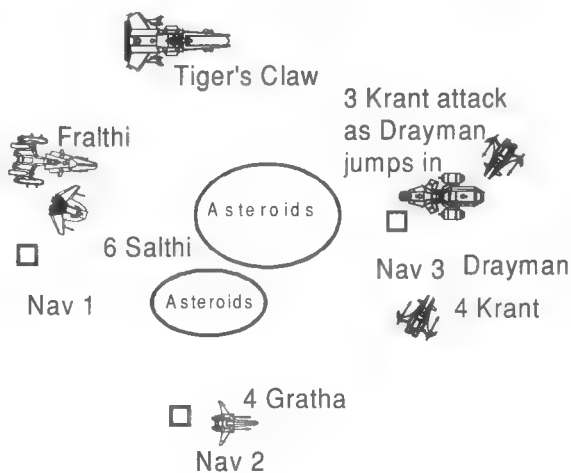
Victory point total for this mission: 12

Victory points required to win this mission: 12

Possible medals: None

This is a two-part mission. The first part is a basic strike mission, then you go to meet a Drayman. There are four Krants waiting, followed by another wing of three Krants, so you should, as always, clean up as many Krants as you can before the Drayman arrives. Once you get back to the *Tiger's Claw*, be sure that the Drayman is with you. Sometimes it wanders off. The way to be sure is to stop outside the *Tiger's Claw*, and target the Drayman. If it is moving away from you, then autonav to nav 3 and back—that brings the Drayman along and “resets” it. Otherwise, you may escort the thing to the *Claw* safely and still be told that you lost the Drayman.

In the bar, Paladin gives you some good news. The boys in Tactical say that the planet-killer weapon can't be used against ships. Of course, Paladin reminds you, sometimes Tactical is wrong.





JOTUNHEIM MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Salthi and Dorkir, 3 Krant, 5 Gratha and Fralthi

Victory points: Dorkir (5), Krants (1 apiece), Gratha (2 apiece), Fralthi (5), rocks

Victory point total for this mission: 23

Victory points required to win this mission: 23

Possible medals: None

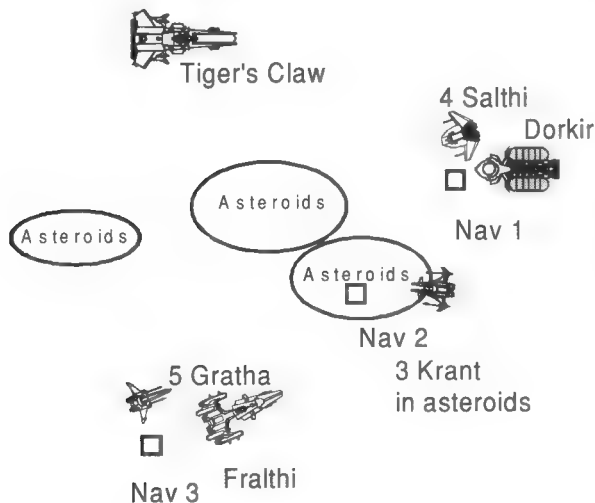
Halcyon thinks the enemy is preparing an ambush...so we're going to go out and meet it. Paladin is concerned that Maniac is, well, a maniac, and should be grounded. Halcyon surprisingly rebuffs the suggestion by asking Maniac if he thinks he can fly and, of course, Maniac assures the Colonel that he's just fine.

Basically, your job in this mission is to blow up everything that you find. The only things that you don't get victory points for are the Salthis

that guard the Dorkir. The Dorkir won't jump, so you needn't rush to destroy it.

Fighting Krants in the rocks isn't the most fun thing in the world to do; here's a case where it's not a bad idea to just be lazy and use your missiles. The Krants seem particularly stupid in the rocks, however, and will fly right at you. As always, wait until your guns are fully charged, then empty your guns at an oncoming

foe, and you'll usually get a Krant on the first pass.





There are five Gratha, which is a lot of Gratha, at the Fralthi. Drop your speed down to about 350 when attacking them, or you'll find that they'll ram you by stopping their engines once you're directly behind them. If you're traveling at 350, then you can swerve in time to avoid the ramming.

You do have some margin for error on this mission, as you needn't get every Gratha and Krant if you did well on the previous mission, but it's a good idea to get all the ships you find, because some will run away and not return. If you fulfilled all the requirements of the first mission, then you've got 12 victory points, and so you need 15 more to win this series (you cannot get any points in mission 3). If you get the Dorkir and the Fralthi, then you've got 10 points. You need 5 more, which you can get by toasting a combination of Gratha and Krants, remembering that Gratha are 2 points apiece and Krants are 1 apiece.

JOTUNHEIM MISSION 3

Mission type: Patrol/Defend/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Gratha, 4 Jalthi, 4 enemy Rapiers and enemy Exeter, 4 Krant, 3 Gratha

Victory points: None

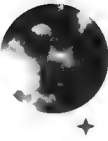
Victory point total for this mission: None

Victory points required to win this mission: None

Possible medals: Bronze Star for 0 medal points

An odd mission; you do just as well if you eject from this mission as if you fly it—better, in some ways. You only get the bronze star if you do not kill any of the enemy Rapiers and the enemy Exeter. (Here's your chance to get a Golden Sun medal with impunity—but there's a game bug that says that you can't get two medals in the same mission, so getting the Golden Sun means that you don't get the Bronze Star.

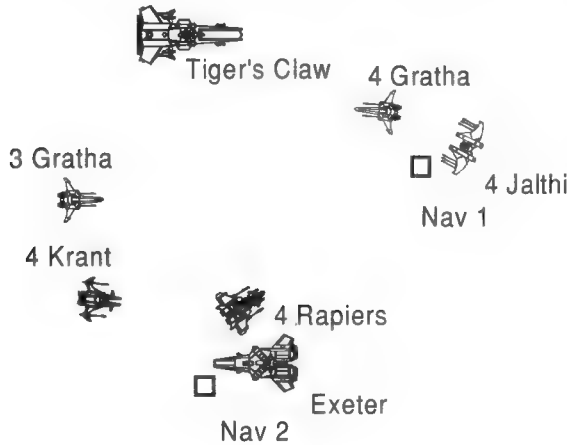
Well, the official line is that you can skip this mission, but True Warriors will fly it anyway, just for the glory. (Remember Lt. Worf's comment in an episode of *Star Trek*: "It is a good day to die, Duross...and it is still early.") Here's how to do it.



Good flying. That's it.

Well, more specifically: First, look at your situation once you're past the Gratha and the Jalthis. Your afterburners should be in good shape (70 percent left), and you should have used no missiles but the friend-or-foe missiles. Similarly, you should have no armor or subsystem damage. There is just no way to take on four Rapiers otherwise.

Then, once you get into range of the Gwenyvar, loiter around 15,000 meters away, and tease the Rapiers out by taunting them. Ideally, you



want just one to come out at a time, so that you can destroy them one by one.

Then, once the escort is gone, go on in and destroy the Exeter. But leave yourself some afterburners, or you'll never get past the Krants and the Gratha; I'm usually so chewed up by that time that all I can do is to speed past them, or, if you're out of afterburners, try flying at top speed, but do lots of

loops and rolls as you work toward the *Claw*; sometimes it slows them down enough for you to get home alive.

BIFROST SERIES

You finally get a look at your quarry in this series...but it slips away.

The *Claw* has caught up with the Kilrathi convoy, and is about to pass it, so that you'll sit between it and the Kilrathi homeworlds (sounds Scylla and Charybdis-like to me!)

First, you scout out the planet-killing ship, which now gets the name *Sivar*, and then you run ahead of the Kilrathi convoy, destroying a fuel depot that the convoy is depending on: If they've not got a fuel depot,

then they can't make it home. With the *Sivar* low on fuel, it might just be possible to destroy it...you hope.

The first mission here is impossible, as it actually requires that you do an impossible thing in order to win. The second mission is extremely difficult (as opposed to impossible), as you've essentially got to replay Venice 4...but this time, in a Scimitar.

Ship: Raptor/Scimitar

Wingman: Paladin

Total possible victory points in this series: 40

Victory points required to win this series: 25

If you lose: You go to the Retreat series.

If you win: You go to the Valgard series.

BIFROST MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalathi, 4 Krant and a Ralari, 6 Jalathi and *Sivar*

Victory points: Jalathi at nav 1 (2 points apiece), touching nav 2 and 3 (2 points apiece), destroying the *Sivar* (2)

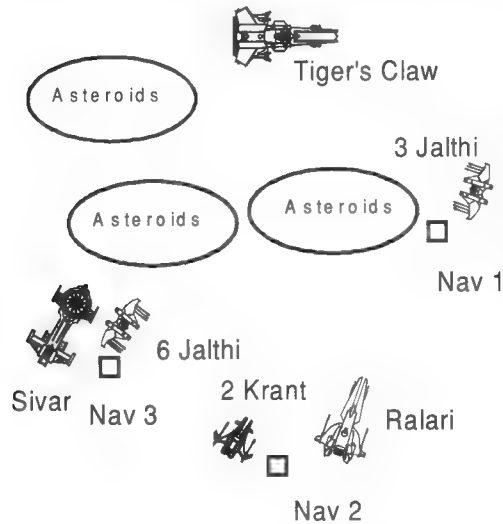
Victory point total for this mission: 12

Victory points required to win this mission: 11

Possible medals: None

The conditions for winning this mission are a little silly. The Jalthis and the nav point are fair, but requiring that you destroy the *Sivar* is crazy; it jumps out as soon as you get near to it. The only way I've ever been able to destroy it is to zip in close to it, and then use the debug "cheat" Alt-Del keystroke to eliminate it. (I never get an acknowledgment for it, but it's the only way to get the "victory" music to play during the debriefing with Halcyon; if you don't zap the *Sivar* but do everything else, you get the "failure" music.)

To target the *Sivar*, rush immediately on afterburners toward the ship,



pressing the T key to reset the targeting computer. The *Sivar* will eventually come up on your targeting screen, and it'll jump out, but you will have gotten it on your flight recorder, which is what Halcyon wants, failure music or no.

The real challenge in this mission is to destroy all of the Jalthis at the *Sivar* location. You don't get a medal or points for it, but it's tremendously satisfying.

Afterwards, Paladin says that he is worried about the rotten attitude of some of the pilots; people are seeming suicidal. He believes in Halcyon, however.

BIFROST MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Salthi, 4 Krant and Lumbari, 4 Jalthi, 5 Gratha, fuel depot (same as Starpost), mines

Victory points: Ralari (5), Depot (25)

Victory point total for this mission: 30

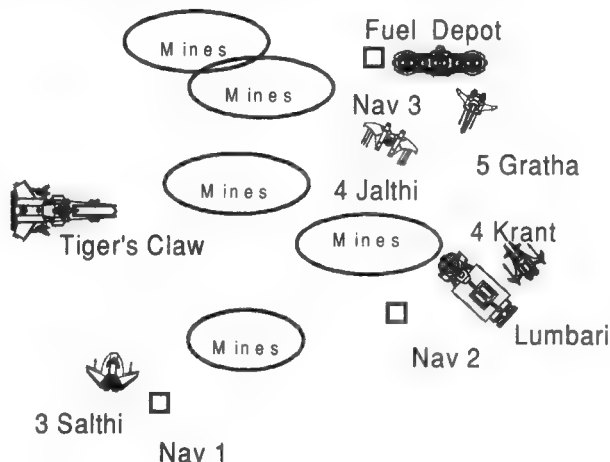
Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: None

As I said above, this is a replay of Venice 4. Conserve your afterburners in the initial encounter with the Krants and the Ralari, as you'll need them for the Jalthis and the Gratha. Killing 5 Gratha is about as tough as killing the 6 Jalthis that you could in the previous mission...but, this

time, it's not optional. You can't really destroy the depot without first destroying the escorts.

A bright side to this mission is that it's about as easy to destroy the depot with a Scimitar's guns as it was to destroy the Star Post with the Rapiers' guns. The Rapiers' lasers are pretty useless, so the comparison really boils down to mass drivers versus neutron guns, and I like mass drivers a bit better.



VALGARD SERIES

Once the fuel depot is blown away, morale is better. Iceman vows to be the one to toast the *Sivar*, and he says no one should get between him and it. Other good news: We got some intelligence about Vega that will allow the final cleanup of the Vega sector, once we're through here. We're decoying the incoming ships, letting them think that we are the fuel dump. No Kilrathi can be allowed to escape, or the *Sivar* will be tipped off, and we'll lose our chance at the planet-reaving butchers.

Angel is still worried that this is a suicide mission.

If you like potting capital ships, then you'll like Valgard. You get to destroy nine capital ships between the two first missions, and you win the series even if you miss two of the ships. They all have decent fighter cover (3–4 heavy fighters), but you're flying a Rapiers, so you should have no trouble.

The last mission carries no victory points, but you've got to fly it, as it's a *Tiger's Claw* defense. (I suppose you could eject immediately upon exiting the *Claw*.)



Ship: Rapier

Wingman: Iceman

Total possible victory points in this series: 45

Victory points required to win this series: 35

If you lose: You go to the Retreat series.

If you win: You go to the Vigrid series.

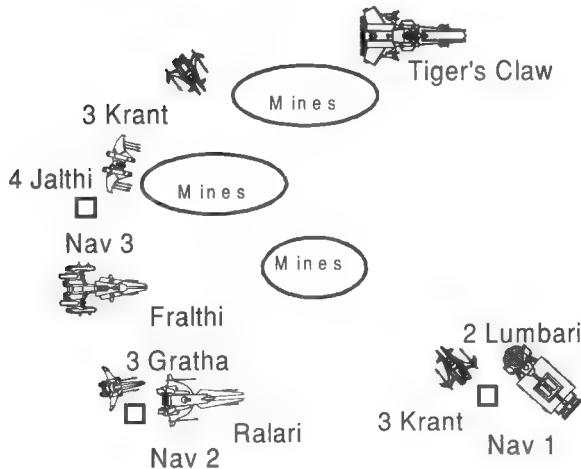
VALGARD MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Krant and 2 Lumbari, 3 Gratha and Ralari, 4 Jalathi and Fralathi, 3 Krant

Victory points: 5 points for each of the 4 capital ships

Victory point total for this mission: 20



Victory points required to win this mission: 15

Possible medals: None

No tricks here, just good, solid flying. It's a shame you don't get a medal of some kind for zapping that many enemies.

Remember that the Rapier's speed can be a disadvantage when following the heavier, slower ships like the Gratha and the Jalathi; re-

duce your speed when you're in the thick of it with those ships, perhaps to 350, or you'll end up accidentally ramming them.

VALGARD MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krant and Lumbari, 3 Jalathi and Dorkir, 4 Krant and 2 Fralathi, 4 Gratha, 2 Jalathi, 3 Gratha and Ralari, mines

Victory points: 5 points each for capital ships

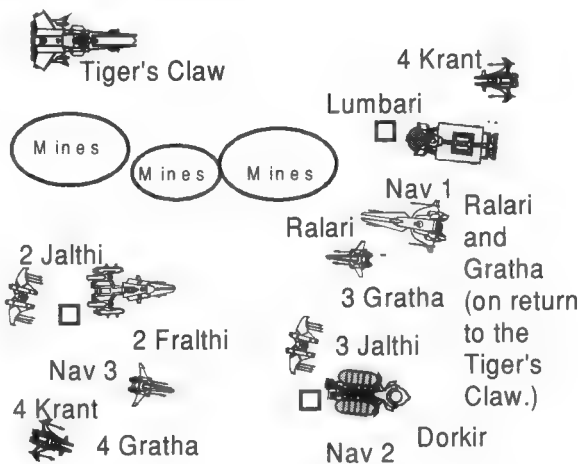
Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: None

This would be a good mission to practice your tease-'em-away-from-the-capital-ship techniques. Try targeting one enemy from far away (10,000–15,000 meters) and taunt the enemy—use insult number 3. Lure one out at a time, and then blast it. Don't be surprised if the last escort fighter ignores you; that's normal.

And don't be daunted by all the capital ships that you see in the map. Remember, take them out with your guns, take your time, and don't worry about them: They're not that dangerous once their escorts are gone.

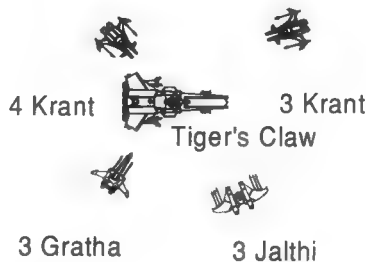


VALGARD MISSION 3

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Krant, 3 Jalathi, 3 Gratha, 3 Krant

Victory points: None





Possible medals: Bronze Star for 170 medal points

Nothing much to say here, either. You get an easy shot at adding 13 kills and a medal to your record.

VIGRID SERIES

This is it. The big enchilada. There's a warm-up patrol mission that actually doesn't count for anything, and then the attack on the *Sivar*. It would be great, except...you're flying with Knight. (He always makes me think of the French guys in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* who pronounce "knight" as "ca-nigget.")

Before you can take on the *Sivar*, however, you've got to destroy 10 Krants, a Fralthi, 6 Jalthis, and 6 Grathas. So be very sparing with those afterburners....

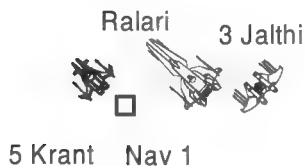
Ship: Rapier

Wingman: Knight

Goal: Destroy the *Sivar*

If you lose: You go to the Retreat series.

If you win: You've won the game.



VIGRID MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol/Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalthis and Ralari, 5 Krant, 4 Gratha, 3 Gratha, 3 Gratha

Victory points: None

As you can see from the map, this is a patrol mission with a capital ship to

destroy, followed by a *Tiger's Claw* defense. The *Claw* is beset by three waves of Gratha (4, 3, and 3). No victory points here, except for the obvious fact that if the *Claw* is toasted, then you're splashed. As always, the *Claw* is a tough old bird, and so you needn't run yourself ragged to make sure that the Gratha are destroyed quickly. Each wing does appear from far away, however, so you can minimize *Claw* damage by running out and meeting each wing; you can usually zap one ship before it gets in firing range of the *Claw*.

VIGRID MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

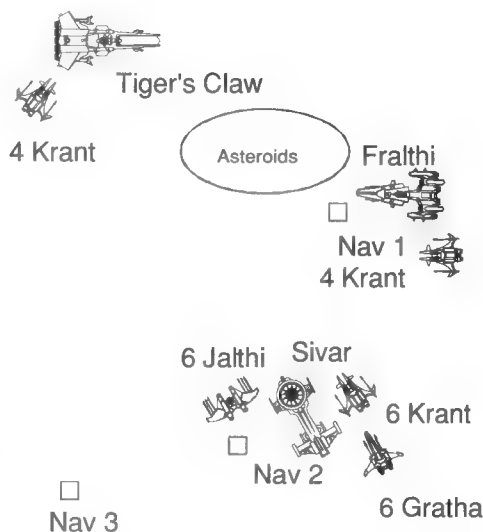
Enemies/obstacles: 2

Krants and Fralthi, 2
Krants, 6 Krants, 6 Jalthi,
6 Gratha, *Sivar*, 4 Krants,
rocks

Victory points: *Sivar*
(win game)

Possible medals: Gold
Star for 228 medal points

Take it slow and easy with the Krant/Fralthi battle. Two Krants are hardly a match for you, and Fralthis are just big slow capital ships. Conserve the afterburner fuel, and try to use the "taunt from far away" approach to draw out one ship at a time. Stay away from the *Sivar*, as its flak guns can be an extra annoyance that keep your shield power low.





Once you've gotten rid of the *Sivar's* 18 escorts, just treat the *Sivar* like any other capital ship. Save the missiles; you'll use them to get rid of the four Krants at the *Tiger's Claw*. What sadist at Origin thought that it would be fun to make you work like a Trojan to blast the *Sivar*, and then have your damaged ship blown to bits by a Krant?

Once the *Sivar* is destroyed, you get to see the Grand Admiral of the Kilrathi fleet in chains before the Emperor. He has made a great mistake by attacking the Terrans too early with the *Sivar*, and as a result has lost the Kilrathi superweapon. The Emperor has demanded an apology, the story explains, and there can be only one apology. Laser beams lance out from the hand weapons of the Imperial Guards, and the Admiral's body dissolves. It's a great scene, and only later, in Wing Commander II, do we find out the Grand Admiral is the Emperor's son. There's not much family loyalty among royalty, I suppose.

RETREAT SERIES

You play this two-game series if you lose any series except Goddard. Once you're in Retreat, you've lost. The only reason you'd play these scenarios would be just for the fun of it, as there's no point in continuing if you get this far.

You may find that "the fun of it" is reduced somewhat by your ship and wingman: a Scimitar and Maniac. There is no way (no way that I can see, anyway) to keep Maniac alive through this.

The best part about this series is the second mission. Finally, you get a *Tiger's Claw* defense mission where the *Claw* is actually in trouble. I can only keep the *Claw* alive if I work fast with the final wing of Gratha. And, of course, the closing cinematic sequence is worth looking at.

RETREAT MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4

Krant and Fralthi,
5 Dralhti, 5 Dralhti,
5 Dralhti, 3 Gratha and
2 Ralari

Possible medals: None

The usual advice when you're facing these many enemies in a Scimitar. Conserve afterburner fuel, don't expect much from your missiles. Vaporize the capital ships if you want to hear victory music.



Tiger's Claw

3 Gratha



Nav 3 2 Ralari

3 wings of
5 Dralhti



Nav 2

4 Krant



Fralthi

Nav 1

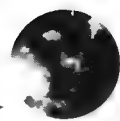
RETREAT MISSION 2

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Dralhti and 5 Gratha

Possible medals: None

The five Dralhti that you see in the map could only endanger the *Claw* after a good while, so take your time and don't waste the afterburners yet. You can avoid the Gratha by being very careful to rout the last Dralhti, not kill it. To do this, knock down its shields, then kind of "tap" it with your guns every 30 seconds or so. There's a good chance that it'll run (and, of course, a chance that *Tiger's Claw* turret gunners will kill it off, making the whole exercise futile.) If the Dralhti runs, the Gratha never appear.



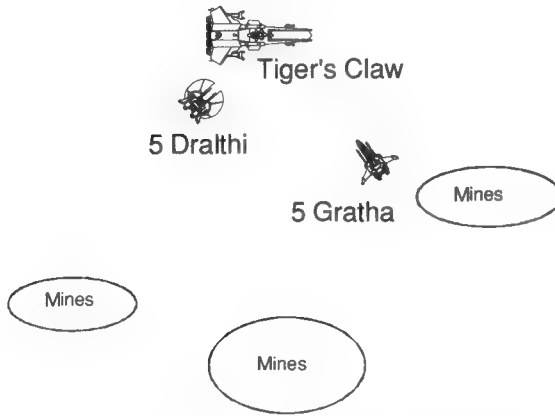
Be careful when flying around the *Claw* with the Scimitar; if it crashes

against the *Claw*, you do serious damage to your ship.

The Scimitar's clumsy handling makes a *Tiger's Claw* crash quite possible—simple to do, almost.

Well, by now, you've presumably won this game and watched the Admiral die. What will the Kilrathi forces look like with their super-weapon and their Grand Ad-

miral gone? That question is answered in Secret Missions 2: the Crusade, in the next chapter.



**THE MISSIONS
OF SECRET
MISSIONS 2**



N I N E



Once Secret Missions 1 proved such a success, Origin knew that they had a potential winner here, perhaps something like their Ultima series. So they started building Wing Commander II and turned out Secret Missions 2 to keep the game-buying public's interest while waiting for Wing Commander II.

GAME OVERVIEW

Secret Missions 2 tells the story of an unfortunate coincidence. The Confederation discovers a world named Firekka, way off in the Antares sector. This world is populated by an intelligent avian species, also called the Firekka. The Firekka and the ConFeds find that they get along, so the bird-people are invited into the Confederation. When the story begins, you've come to Firekka to watch the ceremony officially welcoming Firekka to the Confederation.

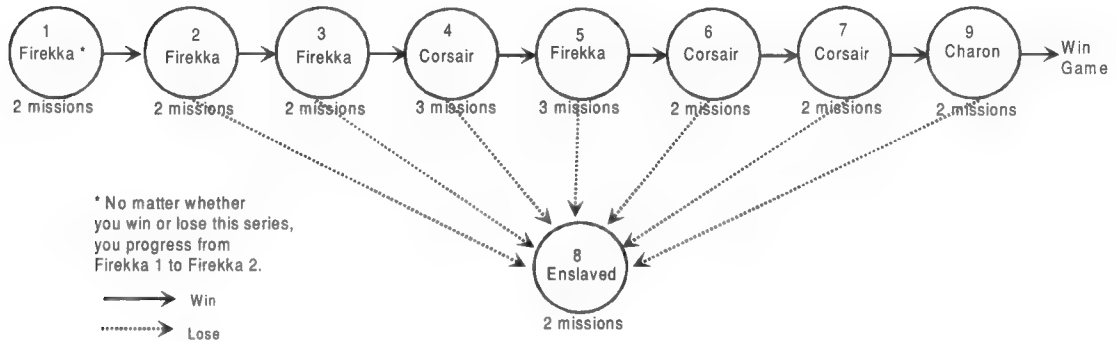
The party soon ends, however, when HQ reports that thousands of Kilrathi spacecraft are en route to Firekka. HQ is confused. What possible value could Firekka have for the cats?

Meanwhile, a Fralthi captain, Ralgha nar Hhallas, defects to the side of the Confederation, bringing his ship and its complement of Dralthi fighters with him. He reveals that the Kilrathi have come to enslave Firekka as part of a ceremony called the Sivar-Eshrad. The conquered planet is offered to Sivar, their war god.

There is clearly no way for the sparse ConFed forces in the area to turn back thousands of Kilrathi ships...but the brass have an idea. If they can disrupt the ceremony itself, killing the Sivar priestesses, then they'll demoralize the Kilrathi. The plan works, and the cats leave. The Confederation's newest member planet is bloodied but unbeaten.



At the same time, you meet two new wingmen, Doomsday and Jazz. Doomsday is a Maori with a massively pessimistic point of view, and Jazz is a musical type with an attitude; the person who plays Jazz's voice gives him a California "surfer dude" kind of diction. Doomsday is a so-so pilot, laconic in his answers and lackluster in his fighting ability, but quick to obey orders. Jazz is kind of like Iceman—an aloof, excellent flyer and fighter, so-so on taking orders.



The game map should look familiar; it's almost identical to the Secret Missions 1 map. Again, notice how linear the game is—blow one series, and you're sent to the Enslaved series, which is an automatic loss, like Retreat in the last game. Notice also that there are two missions in most series—again, like in Secret Missions 2.

Highlights of this game include a new and deadly enemy fighter called Hhriss; a newer, bigger, tougher capital ship called the Snakeir; meaner Dralthis, the Dralthis mark II; the end of Scimitar missions; and some very tough missions in which you get to fly an enemy Dralthis.

Let's get on to Firekka; there's a ceremony about to start...

FIREKKA (1) SERIES

This game has a number of serieses that share names. There are three consecutive two-game Firekka series, and another Firekka series later. For that reason, I'll add a number to the series name to distinguish it from other series with the same name. There are also three Corsair series.

Secret Missions 2 is the first of the Wing Commander games that seems to be really trying to tell a story; hanging around the bar is actually useful in this game. The game designers picked an odd guy to handle the plot exposition, however—Iceman. He says more in the bar than he's said previously.

Iceman explains that there are odd gravitic effects in the Antares sector that cause an effect whereby there are not many jump points in the Antares sector as a whole, but there are dozens of mini-jump points within the Firekka system. That basically means that it's hard to get here in the first place, but once you're in a system, it's easy to move around in it. That, Hunter explains, is probably why the Kilrathi never enslaved Firekka—they never found it in the first place.

You learn that the *Tiger's Claw* has been assigned diplomatic escort duty as a kind of "rest" after the Goddard mission. It will be working with an Exeter, the TCS *Austin*.

The initial scene in the bar is sort of odd. All of a sudden, Iceman is running off at the mouth and Hunter is explaining part of the story so far, but Shotglass is still making idiotic racist ("speciesist?") remarks about how the Firekka remind him of a parakeet that he once had. I guess some things never change.

The main purpose of this series is to set the stage. You'll see Kilrathi presence, which will tip HQ to the fact that something is up.

Ship: Hornet

Wingman: Iceman

Total possible victory points in this series: You cannot lose this series. You go automatically to Firekka (2).

FIREKKA (1) MISSION 1

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Dralhti, 4 Salthi, 3 Gratha (with Drakhai) and Ralari, 4 Krants (with Drakhai)

Victory Points: N/A

Possible medals: Bronze Star for 120 medal points

You've got to escort a diplomatic transport (an Exeter, despite the briefing telling you that it's a Venture) to nav 2 via a roundabout path, because Tactical has spotted a large bogey between the *Tiger's Claw* and the jump point. The jump point that you're going to is the jump to Firekka—despite the series name, you're not at the Firekka system yet—so it's unusual, but not impossible, for there to be a Kilrathi presence here; we don't know yet if they know of the jump point to the Firekka system.

Your first encounter with the new Dralhti Mark IIs occupies your first engagement. You're in a Hornet, up against a ship with mass drivers and better armor, so how can you beat it? Two ways. First, dodge the mass-driver shots. They're slower than laser bolts. Second, now that the Dralhti have mass drivers, they've got a stronger punch—but a shorter arm. You can shoot from 4800 meters away; they can only shoot from 3000 meters. You should be able to eliminate the Dralhti before they zap the Exeter. I have found that the Salthis are so intent on destroying the

Exeter that I can kill them with dumb-fire missiles.



As you can see from the map, the large bogey turns out to be a Ralari with an escort of three Gratha...but not just any Gratha. There is an ace in the wing, called a Drakhai. From now on, you won't see many aces, but you will see a fair amount of Drakhai. They have the usual extra shielding that

aces have. Killing Drakhai Gratha is tough work; but what makes it even tougher is that if you want to kill the Ralari, you can't wait until the escort is dead. The Ralari will jump out very shortly after you destroy its last escort, so you've got to take the Ralari out while the Gratha are still around! And once you've taken care of the Gratha, a wing of Krants

appears, with a Drakhai of its own (the Drakhai wings only include one Drakhai, usually; the other fighters are normal fighters).

This is a neat mission, as it includes the urgency of an escort and the challenge of all those enemy ships. To get the victory music, all you've got to do is escort the Exeter, but blasting all those enemies is a real exercise, and the Bronze Star is a nice touch at the end.

In the bar, Shotglass tells you of a strange occurrence. The Kilrathi just up and left from Vega Prime (a system in the Vega sector, apparently). "Sounds like they had someplace else to go, Sam," you reply.

FIREKKA (1) MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Dralhti (Drakhai), 4 Krant, 5 Jalhti (Drakhai), 5 Dralhti (Drakhai) and 3 Fralhti, mines

Victory Points: N/A

Possible medals: None

For once, when Halcyon says, "don't engage," he means "don't engage." You'll get cussed out something fierce if you take out those Fralhti, or even try.

But, on the other hand...it's a real challenge, and one of the longer missions to accomplish. The wing of Jalhti that you see

in the map and the Dralhtis that follow them are all Drakhai. Take one Jalhti at a time and destroy it, keeping a bit of an eye on the others. My experience is that the Jalhtis really don't support each other; it's almost like you're attacking a bunch of small capital ships. Only use your afterburners to dodge Jalhti bolts, as you'll need them for zipping away from missiles. The Dralhti aren't too tough after that, and three Fralhti are



Nav 2

Convoy of 3
Fralhti and 5 Jalhti



Mines

4 Krant



Nav 1



Tiger's Claw



3 Drakhai
in Dralhti



really not a challenge, except to your patience: Take one at a time, hammer away at its shields, keep an eye on your shields, and run away if a missile's targeted you.

My only quibble with this mission is the big minefield. Hey, these cats just moved in, for goodness' sake! Where'd they get the time to mine the area?

Shotglass says that it's awfully suspicious, the Kilrathi moving through like this. "Those cats always have a reason for what they do," he says. Paladin says that he's about to retire and get his own ship. He'll always find interesting things to do, he says. Bossman keeps talking more and more about his family back home. Sounds like foreshadowing to me.

FIREKKA (2) SERIES

The Colonel announces that our suspicions are true; there's a Kilrathi battle fleet under way to Firekka. Why it's coming is still a mystery. Halcyon warns us all not to fight in planetary atmospheres—goes on for a few minutes—but the opportunity never arises; I don't know what the purpose of the warning was. (There are rumors that there will be atmospheric engagements in Wing Commander III; perhaps that's what the designers were thinking of.)

You fly with Knight in a Rapier.

Ship: Rapier

Wingman: Knight

Total possible victory points in this series: 50

Victory points required to win this series: 50

If you lose: You go to the Charon series.

If you win: You go to the Firekka 3 series.

FIREKKA (2) MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Krant (Drakhai), 3 Hhriss and Snakeir, rocks, 3 Gratha, 3 Krant (Drakhai)

Victory Points: Nav 1, 2, 3 (5 apiece), Snakeir (10)

Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: None

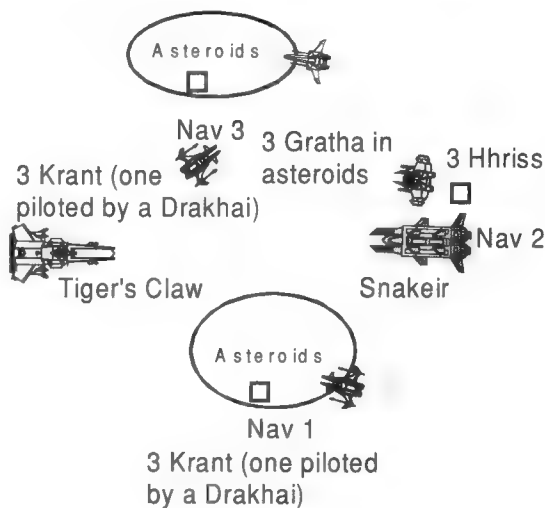
Hhriss!

Imagine a ship more maneuverable than a Salthi, with guns like a Raptor, and armor like a Gratha. That's a Hhriss.

Do the Hhriss have a weak point? Well, both the mass drivers and the neutron guns that form their weapon complement have ranges of 3000 meters. Your lasers have a range of 4800 meters, so you might try holding them off and attacking with lasers. I've never been able to accomplish that, but you might give it a swing.

I hate to sound repetitious, but the only way to zap a Hhriss seems to be a variation on what I've suggested all along. Pick one Hhriss out of the pack, lock your targeting computer so that you don't lose it, then hang onto it, staying on its tail as much as possible until you kill it.

Snakeirs are just like other capital ships, except they have tougher shields. Snakeir shielding is about twice as thick as a Starpost's. Just move in close and blast it. Missiles are unnecessary when zapping the Snakeir; save them for the fight in the rocks, coming up.



After tangling with three Hhriss and a Snakeir, fighting the three Gratha and a wing of Krants led by a Drakhai in the asteroid field you see in the map actually seems easy. Remember to use full guns, wait for a complete blaster charge before opening fire, and concentrate on one enemy at a time. You can go at your full speed in the asteroids if there are enemies in the asteroids with you. If you've got missiles, then this is the time to use them. The enemy's movements are restricted by the asteroids, so you can even use dumb-fire missiles against Krants while in the rocks.

FIREKKA (2) MISSION 2

Mission type: Defend

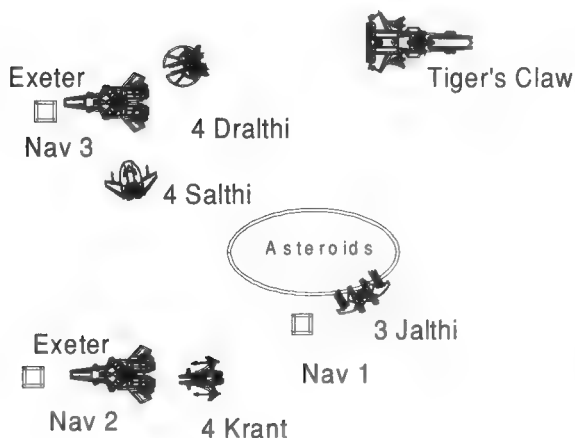
Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalthei, rocks, 4 Krant, 4 Dralthei, 4 Salthei

Victory Points: First Exeter (12), second Exeter (13)

Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: Bronze star for 200 medal points



I'm not sure if it's Tactical or Halcyon, but someone around here doesn't know the difference between a Venture and an Exeter. You're flying a mission to ensure that the diplomats get out of Firekka safely before the Kilrathi arrive. According to the briefing, they'll be in Ventures (the *U Thant* and the *Trygve Le*), but they're in Exeters. It's just as well, as

Exeters are easier to defend. In fact, this is probably the easiest escort mission in the Wing Commander I group of games. Both ships jump out fairly quickly, so there's not much challenge. Afterburner in and meet

the bad guys that you see in the illustration, and destroy as many as you can. If you get them all, you get a Bronze Star.

So that there's room in the database for two new pilots, they had to get rid of someone, and so Bossman bought the farm. Angel was flying with him, and so is deeply grieved by his death. More foreshadowing of Wing Commander II—we find that Angel is particularly vulnerable after a friend's death, and Paladin intends to retire, get a ship of his own, but still do "interesting" things.

FIREKKA (3) SERIES

Ship: Raptor

Wingman: Spirit

Goals: You must fulfill all the goals of this series to win this series.

If you lose: You go to the Charon series.

If you win: You go to the Corsair 1 series.

FIREKKA (3) MISSION 1

We meet Ralgha nar Hhallas in the form of the captain of a defected Fralthi. That's not the difficult part of this series, however. The second mission requires a Drayman escort that's very tough. You fly with Spirit, but send her home early if you want her to live. She may not be flying her best—she's gotten the official word that Phillip has, indeed, been taken by the Kilrathi.

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Hhriss, 5 Krant (Drakhai) and Fralthi (enemy), 5 Dralthi (Drakhai)

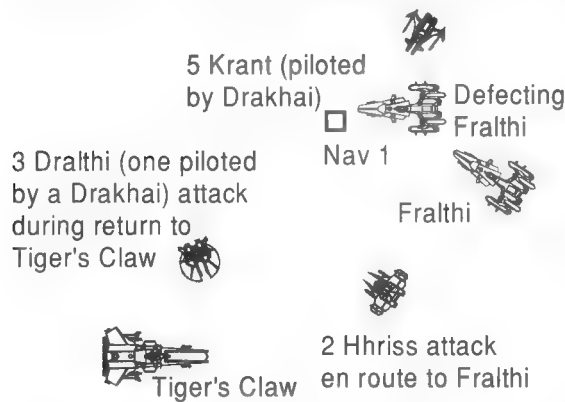
Goals: Save friendly Fralthi, destroy enemy Fralthi

Possible medals: Gold Star for 200 medal points.

It's really easy to miss the ship that you're supposed to be defending here. When you drop out of autonav, you don't see the gray dot on your radar that represents the friendly Fralthi.

To save the Fralthi, just rush out to meet the Krants. As you can see from the mission map, there are four regular Krants and a Drakhai Krant. My recommendation is that you destroy all the Krants except the Drakhai first, then kill the Drakhai. Why? Simple. Drakhai have better shields than normal ships—not better guns. Waste five minutes on the Drakhai, and the other four Krants will pummel the Fralthi. And don't worry about the enemy Fralthi; it seems totally uninterested in destroying the defecting Fralthi. Kill the five Krants quickly, then take your time destroying the enemy Fralthi. Then fly out to meet Ralgha's Fralthi, and escort it to the *Tiger's Claw*. You'll meet five Dralthi, including a Drakhai, and the advice is the same—leave the Drakhai for last. And, for heavens sake, please don't rush the Dralthis head-on! Five pair of mass drivers all

trained on you is a better morning wake-up than caffeine. Wait until your blaster charge is full, then unload onto a Dralthi, and you'll probably kill it on the first pass, except for the Drakhai. Then it's home for you, and a Gold Star.



In the Lounge, Maniac's back, sort of. He says that he

hopes that you'll get to fly together again. Shotglass says that the rumor is that Halcyon's going to get promoted. He wonders who would take over the *Claw* in the Colonel's place?

FIREKKA (3) MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Jalthei (Drakhai), 3 Krant, 4 Dralthi, 4 Salthi, 4 Gratha

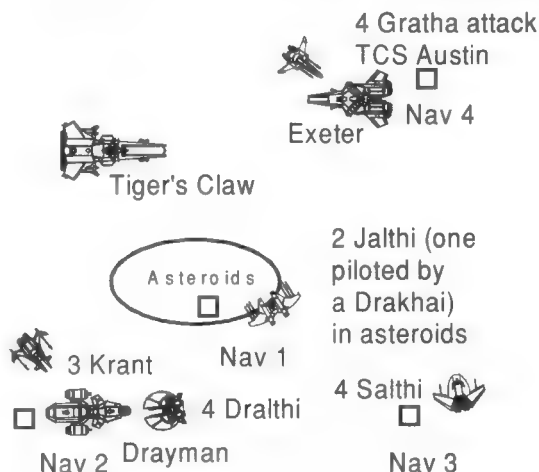
Goals: Keep Drayman and Exeter alive

Possible medals: None

There are two more battle fleets on their way; things are looking worse. Finally, the Kilrathi speak. They warn off the Confederate forces from the “holy ground of Lord Sivar, where no unbelievers may go.” Sivar, Halcyon explains, is a Kilrathi war god, but he doesn’t know what the “way of Sivar” is. The *Claw* has been given one day to withdraw, so we’ll make it look like we did by withdrawing to another system, the Corsair system. Then HQ will tell us what next to do. We also meet Prince Thrakhath, the sender of the message—he’s introduced as the “Crown Prince, and perhaps their best fighter pilot.” As part of the withdrawal of Terran and Firekkan forces from the system, you’ve got to escort a Firekkan Drayman, then patrol some nav points looking for enemies to destroy.

Once you’re at the Drayman, work fast—the Krants are already pounding it. Concentrate on whichever ship is currently firing on the Drayman—fire several volleys, if possible, as you can sometimes take out a Krant from behind on the first pass with the powerful guns that the Raptor is equipped with. If you can, rout the last Krant, so you won’t have to kill five Dralhti.

As you can see from the map, on the way home, you’ll see the Austin beset by four Gratha attackers. Don’t worry; it jumps almost immediately. The question is, do you destroy the Gratha? Look at your after-burner situation before you decide. You’re probably pretty low by now. The Gratha are in two groups of two ships; the far group will usually see that the Austin has gone, and will turn for home.





If that's the case, and if you have some fuel, then you might engage the Gratha, but don't do it if you're low on fuel.

In the Lounge, afterward, you meet Jazz.

CORSAIR (1) SERIES

We sneak off to the nearby Corsair system, hoping that the Kilrathi will think that we're gone from the Antares sector altogether. Now, we don't want the cats to know that we're still around, so you'll fly a few undercover missions. Undercover? Yes, undercover, and in a Dralthi from the defected Fralthi.

The Dralthi is probably the worst ship that you've ever got to fly in any of the Wing Commander games. It's got lousy shields and lousy speed, although it does have mass drivers. Just when you thought that you were free of the Scimitar, it returns...but with less shielding.

If all you want to do is to advance along the game's winning path, then all you really need to do is to hit the nav points. If you do that, then you'll rack up the 50 victory points that you need to move along back to Firekka.

Ship: Dralthi

Wingman: Jazz

Total possible victory points in this series: 60

Victory points required to win this series: 50

If you lose: You go to the Charon series.

If you win: You go to the Firekka 4 series.

CORSAIR (1) MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Hhriss (Drakhai), rocks, 4 Jalthi (Drakhrai), 2 Snakeir, 4 Krant (all Drakhai), 4 Jalthi (Drakhai)

Victory Points Nav 1 (30), Snakeir (2 of them, 5 points apiece)

Victory point total for this mission: 40

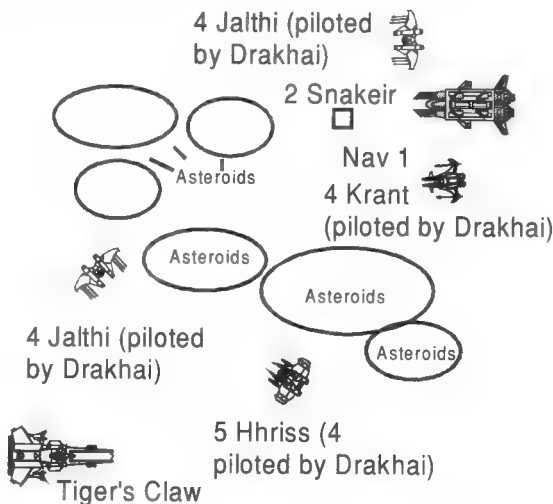
Victory points required to win this mission: 40

Possible medals: None

Boy, is the Dralhti a rotten ship to fly. Thankfully, however, Jazz is a good wingman. You can take the Hhriss, but you're going to do it on pure afterburners, and you may need that fuel later. Bear in mind that they won't attack you if you don't attack them. Be careful in the rocks that you see in the map, also: The Dralhti's not very maneuverable.

I don't think it's a good idea to go after the Snakeirs; it's just about impossible to take them out. I just run out past nav 1, hang a left, and then cruise for a while, until

it's a straight shot back to the *Tiger's Claw*. Oddly enough, I get told sometimes that I wasted both Snakeirs. It's an irrelevant bug, however, because whether or not you torch the carriers will not affect winning or losing.



CORSAIR (1) MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalhti (all Drakrai), 3 Dralhti, 2 enemy Rapiers, 2 Jalhti,

Victory Points nav 1, 2 (10 apiece)

Victory point total for this mission: 20

Victory points required to win this mission: 20

Possible medals: None

Halcyon tells you that they now know what's going on with this "way of Lord Sivar" stuff. These annual ceremonies are a sacrifice to their war god, Sivar. The Kilrathi conquer a planet for their god; if everything goes well, then the god is pleased. If the cats fail to take the planet, then Sivar will, they believe, favor their enemies in the upcoming year's battles. Furthermore, the cult does not allow the presence of any unbelievers at the ceremony, so the Firekkans will be converted to the cult of Sivar by force, or will be killed.

Captain Ralgha, of the defected Fralthi, has suggested that if the ceremony could be disrupted, then the Kilrathi would be demoralized, as that would show them unfavorably in Sivar's eyes. So the ConFed plan is to find a place where a small group of Marines can land on Firekka unnoticed. Those Marines will then, with local Firekkan resistance fighters, make their way to the ceremony itself, where they will assassinate the priestesses. The *Claw* has two jobs here: First, figure out where the Marines can most safely land; second, escort the Marines back to Firekka. Your job is to gather communications traffic so that the Tactical Operations staff can determine the best place to put down the Marines. This is an information-gathering mission, which is why there are no points for

killing enemy ships in this scenario.



This is very similar to the previous mission, except there are no Snakeir carriers or other bogeys to destroy and get victory points for. If you do not attack the Jalthi that you see in the map, they will not attack you. The Rapiers, on the other hand, seem wise to you, and will

attack. You will probably have to stand and fight here. My suggestion is to afterburner past the Rapiers—they're in the front—and hit the Dralthis behind them, as they are weaker. When attacking Dralthis, only fire on a Dralhti that you've got locked in your targeting computer, or you might accidentally fire on Jazz. Then come back and get the Rapiers.

Like the Hhriss, the only way you'll take out some Rapiers will be on afterburners. Once you've got the rear part of a Rapier damaged, use a heat seeker to finish it off. When Jazz gets damaged, tell him to form on your wing and keep him there until his shields are recharged, then let him loose again.

At nav 2, you'll find that the two Jalthi attack you, as well as the two Rapiers that follow them. The Jalthi are easier to kill than the Rapiers, so save those two dumb-fire missiles for the Rapiers. Again, the way to do this is on afterburners.

It doesn't seem like the Kilrathi are fooled by you flying Dralthis; you were attacked in two of three cases. You suggest the Halcyon that perhaps there's some other recognition signal that the enemy is using. Halcyon agrees, shelving the use of Dralthis for undercover work for the moment.

FIREKKA (4) SERIES

The *Claw* moves back into the Firekkan system to ensure that the Marines land safely. This series is a difficult one for three reasons. First, both missions are escort missions, with Drakhai among your attackers. Second, the ships that you do the escorts in are grossly inadequate: first a Hornet, then a Dralthis. A Raptor would be a much better answer for escort duty. Third, you have no leeway: You've got to save all three capital ships—or you lose the series. I might even add that, fourth, you've got to fly with Doomsday. He's no Jazz.

Ship: Hornet/Dralthis

Wingman: Doomsday

Goals: You must complete all mission objectives in order to win this series.

If you lose: You go to the Charon series.

If you win: You go to the Corsair (2) series.

FIREKKA (4) MISSION 1

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Salthi (Drakhai), 2 Gratha, 4 Salthi, 5 Dralhti

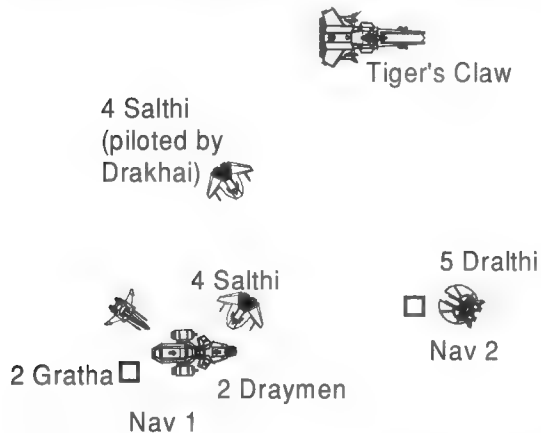
Goals: Safely escort both Draymen

Possible medals: None

This may be the toughest mission in Secret Missions 2. Doomsday is just about useless, and you've got rotten firepower against some sizable waves of enemies.

First, as you see in the map, you'll come up against a wing of Salthi lead by a Drakhai. The Drakhai is not too smart, and you can do serious damage to it by just firing right at it as it flies toward you. It won't take the hint and start firing at you until later. By then, you can swerve to miss his shots, and then you'll have to chase him to finish him off. It's worthwhile using the fuel to chase the Drakhai, however, because if you don't get him now, he returns later, when you're trying to save an escort mission.

When you appear at the two Draymen, you'll see them under heavy fire from two Gratha. The Gratha are so intent on killing the Draymen that they'll let you get right behind them and blast them, but, as you've only got two lasers, it takes time. I recommend that you not use missiles; you'll need them later. The first Drayman will jump out almost instantly, and there's a good chance that once that happens, the remaining Gratha (you did kill one by then, I hope) will run away. Let it. If it runs away, then you've never got to deal with the Salthis.





You will probably have to get within 1500 meters of the Drayman, or when you autonav it won't come with you. Then you're up against five Dralthis, and their mass drivers make mincemeat out of that Drayman.

If you routed the Grathas, and so didn't take damage from Salthis to both your ship and the Drayman, then you can keep the Drayman alive by focusing on just the ship that's firing on the Drayman. Attack the lead Dralthis; that'll drive it off. Then get behind the first Dralthis that fires on the Drayman, and stick a dumb-fire missile up its tailpipe. That'll weaken it, then you can finish it with guns. Use your other dumb-fire and your single heat-seeker in the same way. Chase and harass any ship that attacks the Drayman, killing that ship if possible—but keeping fire off the Drayman is a higher priority than is killing enemies. The Drayman will eventually jump out, and then you can go after the Dralthis, or just go home.

FIREKKA (4) MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Gratha (all Drakhai), 5 Hhriss (Drakhai), 3 Jalthi, 3 Krant

Goals: Safely escort Drayman, touch nav 1 and 2

Possible medals: None

This is not a difficult mission—if you play it right. It's bloody impossible if you don't.

Angel and Sorcerer went out to escort the TCS *General Powell*, a troop transport carrying 150 Marines, and no one has heard from Angel, Sorcerer, or the *Powell*. Halcyon thought that the *Powell* was killed, but then a call came in from one of the Marines on the *Powell*, Major Kristi Marks. She said that some of the Marines had gotten out of the cargo hold, and were trying to retake the ship.

The situation is unclear. The Kilrathi clearly have the ship under tow, but is it held by humans or cats? It will be under heavy fighter escort, so you're to go out undercover in a Dralthis (Tactical thinks they've figured out the new recognition codes) and see if you can free the *Powell*. The



Powell will mini-jump around, rather than flying straight through normal space, so you'll have to patrol some likely jump points. Do not fire upon the Kilrathi until you see them attack the Drayman.

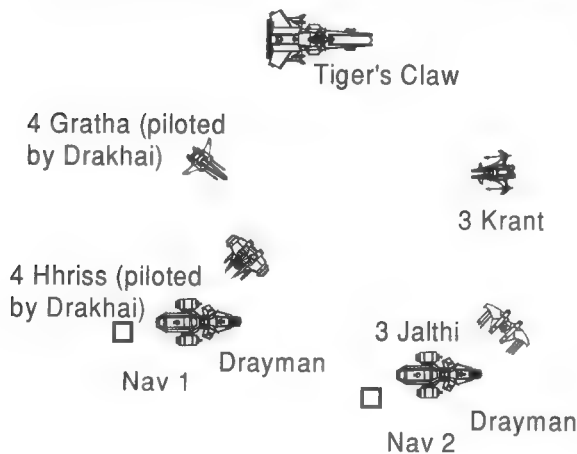
Fly right by the Gratha. They won't see you as an enemy, and you don't need that fight, at least not in a Dralhti.

You travel to nav 1 and see some Hhriss with the Drayman. The Hhriss will likely leave you alone if you don't bother them, and the *Powell* will mini-jump almost immediately to the next nav point. It looks scary, but it isn't. Just fly straight and level, and don't shoot at anybody.

At nav 2, the real action starts. Those Jalathi are going to attack the Drayman, so afterburner in and blast them. They are far enough from the Drayman that you should be able to destroy them all before they get anywhere near the transport.

After the Jalathi are dead, get within 1500 meters of the Drayman so that you get the "Glad to see you" message. Then go to nav 2, and autonav to the *Tiger's Claw*. Don't wait around for the Drayman, as it just wanders around. You will not see the Drayman on the cinematic se-

quence when you autonav, but that's okay; it'll be there when you drop out of autonav.



When you do drop out of autonav, you'll see three Krants on their way to the Drayman. Afterburner in and blast them. Your mass drivers are pretty nasty guns, so bore right in and take the first Krant out, head-to-head. I know that I've often

said not to do that, but you're in a big rush, and shouldn't mind trading some shield power for Drayman safety. Dodge incoming shots, and do some heavy damage to the lead Krant, then finish it off and go after the other two. Again, you should be able to destroy the enemy ships before they even get within shooting distance of the Drayman.

Back in the Lounge, it's pretty clear that all the ConFed forces are bugging out. Let's hope that the Marines can do their job down on the planet.

CORSAIR (2) SERIES

The Marines made it, according to Halycon. The Kilrathi suspect that we're here, and have sent some heavily armed reconnaissance ships. You can't let them go home.

Ship: Raptor

Wingman: Hunter

Total possible victory points in this series: 50

Victory points required to win this series: 50

If you lose: You go to the Charon series.

If you win: You go to the Corsair (3) series.

CORSAIR (2) MISSION 1

Mission type: Defend/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Dralthi (Drakhai), 5 Salthi, rocks, 3 Gratha and Ralari, 4 Dralthi (Drakhai), 4 Jalathi (2 Drakhai) and Snakeir

Victory Points destroy Ralari (10), destroy Snakeir (15)

Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: Gold Star for 270 medal points





Straightforward strike mission; set 'em up and knock 'em down. When attacking the Snakeir's escort, destroy the two Drakhai first. Other than that, there are really no tricks here, just the chance to zap a lot of bad guys and not have to worry about some other ship. It's particularly fun to destroy the Salthi with a Raptor. Just set the guns to "full guns," and then give the Salthi two volleys, head-on or from the rear.

There is one challenge in this mission: keeping Hunter alive. Do your best, but remember that keeping him alive won't affect the success or failure of the mission. You can usually get him to go home when you're in the asteroids, and then he'll be okay.

CORSAIR (2) MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Salthi (Drakhai), 5 Salthi, 5 Dralhti (2 Drakhai) and 2 Dorkir, 2 Hhriss

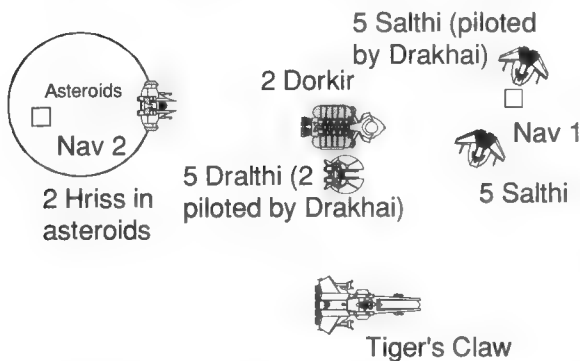
Victory Points Dorkirs (13 points for the first, 12 for the second)

Victory point total for this mission: 25

Victory points required to win this mission: 25

Possible medals: None

The 10 Salthis in the beginning are intended to just soften you up.



Once you're through them, send Hunter home. If you're damaged, or low on after-burner fuel, abort the mission.

Once at the Dralhti/Dorkir location that you see in the map, rush in and attack the Dorkirs with your guns, bobbing and weaving on after-burners. They will jump out

if you wait to destroy all of the fighter escort, so you've got to zoom in and blast them. It should take about five passes to get the first Dorkir. By

then, the second Dorkir should have arrived; ice that one also, then either run back to the *Claw* if you're low on fuel, or destroy the Dralhti. There is no need to touch nav 2, so if you're hurting after the Dorkirs then you can just bypass nav 2 altogether and go straight home to the *Tiger's Claw*.

Afterward, you see the Kilrathi priestesses assassinated by the human and Firekkan Marines, at the Sharrhi Settlement. (The three-part brassiere on the priestess seems a mite sleazy, Origin.)

Angel has been promoted to Major, and will go to the Austin to lead its fighter squadron. That's an important step on the way to commanding the *Concordia's* fighters.

CORSAIR (3) SERIES

The Marines have done their job; now its up to you to cover their retreat. All the Wing Commander games have a "crescendo" mission or two, a mission where you fight wave after wave of enemy fighters. This is where Secret Missions 2's crescendo mission is.

Despite the large number of enemies, this is a childishly easy series to win. All you need do is to destroy the Ralari in the first mission, and you've won the series.

Good thing, too: Not only is the Dralhti a lame ship, Angel is an annoying wingman.

Ship: Dralhti/Rapier

Wingman: Angel

To win this series: You must destroy the Ralari in the first mission.

If you lose: You go to the Charon series, but are foreordained to lose the game.

If you win: You go to the Charon series, and get the chance to win the game.



CORSAIR (3) MISSION 1

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Gratha and Ralari, 4 Krant (Drakhai), 4 Salthi (Drakhai)

Goals: Destroy Ralari

Possible medals: None

Prince Thrakhath communicates again with the humans, directly with the *Tiger's Claw*. He has given the *Claw* one quarter of a day to retreat, but he warns that it must not try to rescue the remaining Marines that

are on Firekka: He claims those as his own to kill.



Tiger's Claw



Ralari



4 Gratha

4 Salthi (one piloted by a Drakhai) attack en route to Tiger's Claw



4 Krant (piloted by Drakhai)



Nav 1 Drayman

Halcyon, of course, is having none of that, and so you're off to save whatever Marines you can. So that you can get close to the planet without getting killed by the thousands of Kilrathi ships, you're back in the Dralhti.

As you see in the map, you will run across not only the Ralari, which you must

destroy, but you'll also happen upon a ConFed troop transport (a Drayman) that's being attacked by Krants. Believe it or not, whether or not you save the Drayman is irrelevant to winning. Of course, it would be a moral loss to let the Drayman die, wouldn't it?

CORSAIR (3) MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles:

Drakhai Salthi, 3 Hhriss, 4 Gratha, 2 Krant (Drakhai), 2 Jalathi, 4 Salthi (Drakhai) and a Dorkir, 3 Jalathi and a Fralathi, 4 Dralathi (Drakhai), 4 Krant

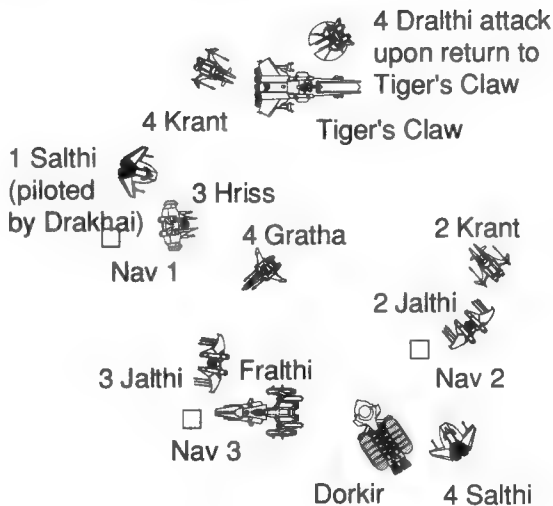
Goals: There are no goals for this mission.

Possible medals: None

This is the turkey-shoot mission. Fly well and rack up more kills. To make life easier, you could rout the lone Salthi, avoiding the Hhriss, and you can rout the last Dralathi, so that the Krants do not appear at the *Tiger's Claw*.

Halcyon tells you that we're pulling out, but we're trying to do as much damage as we can, so that the Kilrathi can't hold Firekka. He also tells you that he's being transferred to Tactical Operations, and he's recommending you to replace him.

Flying a desk? Doesn't sound like much fun.



CHARON SERIES

This is actually two series. If you got here because you lost a previous series, then you will lose the game no matter what. If you got here because you won the Corsair (3) series, then you can win the game from here.

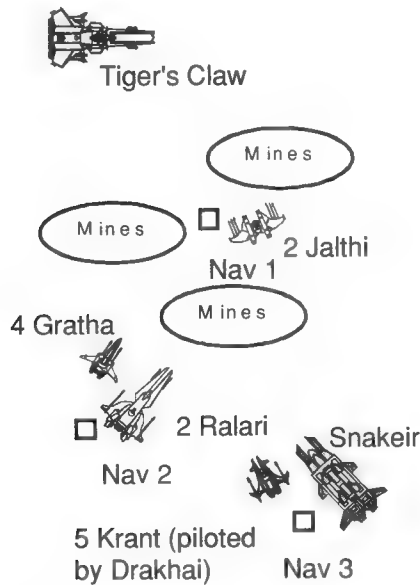
You can win the game, but you must pay a price: You've got to fly with Maniac. Yes, they let Todd out of sickbay. If you can keep him alive, great—I've never been able to do it. He won't go home, and he has no common sense when fighting. Just stay out of his line of fire.

This series is very simple to win. All you need do is to successfully defend the *Tiger's Claw* in the last mission. But that's just the minimum; on the other hand, you can do sufficiently well in the first mission that you'll win a Medal of Valor, and get to keep it this time! (The other Medal of Valor gets pinned on you at Venice 4, and you can't save that game—it's the end of Wing Commander I.)

Ship: Raptor, then Rapier

Wingman: Maniac

Victory conditions: If you entered this by winning Corsair 3, then you automatically win Secret Missions 2. Otherwise, you automatically lose Secret Missions 2.



CHARON MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Jalthi, 4 Gratha and 2 Ralari, 5 Krant (Drakhrai) and Snakeir

Goals: There are no goals to this mission.

Possible medals: Medal of Valor for 165 medal points

More chances to rack up extra kills on your record. Go for the Medal of Valor; to

get it, zap the Snakeir (70) and the two Ralari (50), and its Gratha escort, and you'll be in.

CHARON MISSION 2

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 6 Dralthi (Drakhai), 5 Salthi (2 Drakhai), 2 Hhriss.

Goal: Save the *Tiger's Claw*

Possible medals: None

Comments


We're running for the border. The Vega system needs us, and that's where we're off to. But there's a Kilrathi strike force between us and Vega, and we don't have time to go around it—so we'll have to go through it.

As you can see from the mission map, this is a *Tiger's Claw* defense where you've actually got to hustle a little, or you might lose the *Claw*. Focus on whatever ship is firing on the *Claw*.

Afterwards, you see the final cinematic sequence, of the Kilrathi leaving Firekka. Despite the fact that you're in retreat, you've still won the game.

Things look pretty good. The Kilrathi have been badly bloodied, Vega is more secure, and we haven't seen any Sivar dreadnoughts since we destroyed the first one. The Kilrathi pilots will

fear for the next year that Lord Sivar destines them to die in battle, because of the botched ceremony at Firekka. Soon you'll be in charge of the *Claw*, and as such that means that you can probably requisition a Raptor any time you feel like it, and fly a mission or two. Life's pretty sweet, eh? Just you wait....

 6 Dralthi



Tiger's Claw



5 Salthi (2 piloted by Drakhai)

2 Hhriss



**THE MISSIONS
OF WING
COMMANDER II**



T E N

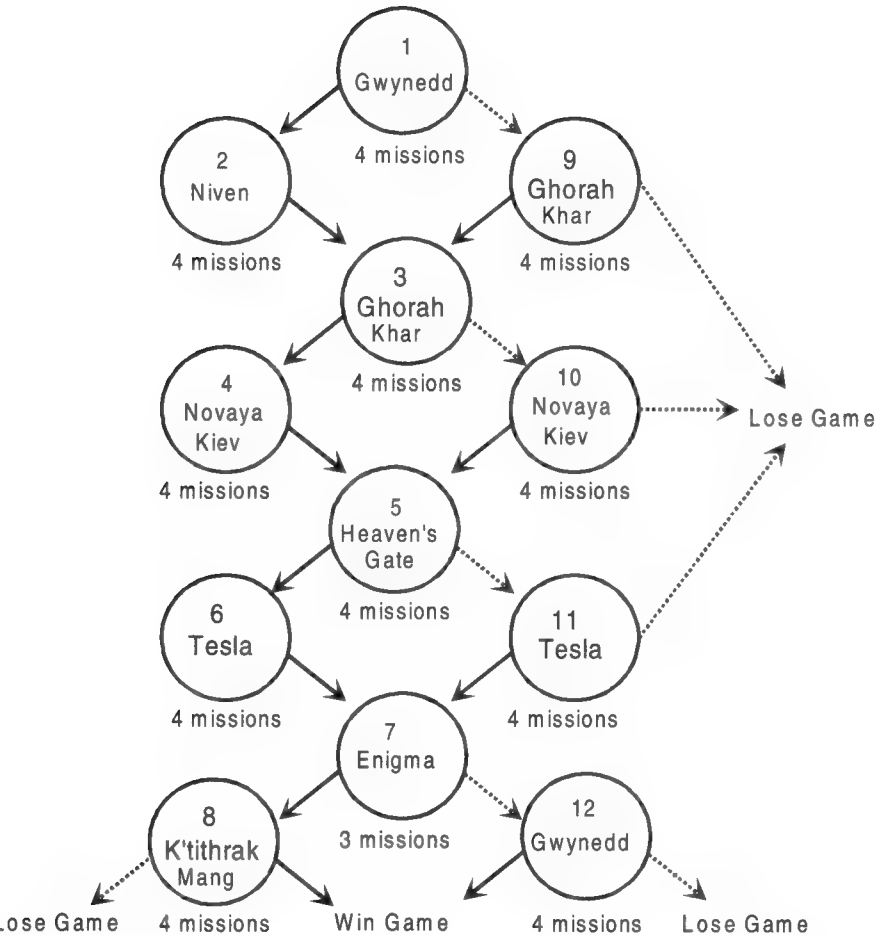


Secret Missions 2 told us more about the characters of the Wing Commander story than we'd known before. It turns out that this was basically just a setup for Wing Commander II. In Wing Commander II, flying is less important and story is more important. Don't take that the wrong way, however: You should still fly as well as possible, and there are major challenges for pilots. But actually winning the game has become much easier, and that together with the enriched story makes for a good game.

In this game, you must fly in a different world from the world of Wing Commander I and Secret Missions. You have been disgraced by a traitor's framing of you for a crime that you did not commit. Only by flying well will you gain the respect of your fellow pilots. All is not bad, however; you've got some solid friends in Paladin, Spirit, and Angel, and some new friends, including Sparks McCullough. There are new challenges and lots of missions to fly.

GAME OVERVIEW

The game tree of Wing Commander II (shown here) is simpler than the Wing Commander I game tree in three ways. First, there are fewer series to fly. Second, even though it looks like there are 12 series, there are not. Series 10, 11, and 12 are really not completely new series, as the losing path was in Wing Commander I; instead, they are just mirror images of winning series, with minor differences. Third, and most important, the notion of victory points has disappeared, to be replaced by the notion of a "key mission" or, in a few cases, "key missions." In some series, there is a single goal in one or two missions that must be fulfilled in order to progress to the next series. In some missions (2, 4, and 6), there are actually no goals. No matter what you do, you will progress to the next series.



In series 2, 4 and 6, you proceed to the winning series (3, 5 and 7, respectively) whether you win the series or not.



Consider what this means. You could eject from every mission in series 1, then go to series 9, and eject from every mission except the key mission in series 9. Then you could eject from every mission in series 3, and eject from every mission in series 10 except the crucial mission. Then you'd eject from all missions in series 5, and all missions in series 11 except for the key mission. That would take you to Enigma, where you could punch out of every mission, and then on to series 12, where you'd fly one mission in Gwynedd. Just four missions can win the game for you. I am by no means suggesting that you do that; it's just interesting to note how simple it is to do this, in theory.

Because of these simplified game winning conditions, you'll find that there's less in the way of "tricks" in this game than there was for the Wing Commander I mis-

sions. So far as I know, you are never required to touch a nav point in this game, which means that you can often just skip a nav point in an asteroid field, if you don't feel like dealing with the rocks.

GWENYDD SERIES (NUMBER 1)

There are a lot of cinematic sequences when this starts, but if you've played the game, then you know the story: It's ten years later, your player has been disgraced by the loss of the *Tiger's Claw*, the *Claw* was lost because of stealth fighters, no one believes you about the stealth fighters, Ghorah Khar rebelled against the Empire, and that rebellion denied the Prince the shipyards wherein he made the stealth fighters. (Read the Chapter 6 overview of the game if you want more details.) You're now posted to Gwentydd Station, flying with a reservist named Shadow. This series tells the story of how you get onto a Confederation carrier in the first place.

This is a classic "first series" in that it gives you a taste of what you'll be doing for the rest of the game. It starts out with a patrol, where you fly a Ferret on a patrol, then goes to a defense mission, then an escort, and finally another defense. There is a strong similarity between Gwentydd 0 and Enyo 1. Both fly a fast, lightly armored ship in a diamond pattern that involves Dralhti/Drakhri and Salthi/Sarthas, as well as asteroids.

Despite that similarity, however, this series also highlights the differences between the first group of games and the second. Despite the fact that there are four missions to fly here, you needn't really do much of anything to succeed in this mission. Basically, all you're doing is flying shotgun for some Broadwords, hoping that they'll zap the Fralthra before the Fralthra zaps them. You can pretty much twiddle your thumbs on that mission, mainly keeping yourself alive, and the Broadwords will do their job.

Ship: Ferret

Wingman: Shadow

Winning criteria: The Broadwords that you escort in mission 2 must destroy the Fralthra.

If you lose: You go to the Ghorah Khar (9) series.

If you win: You go to the Niven series.

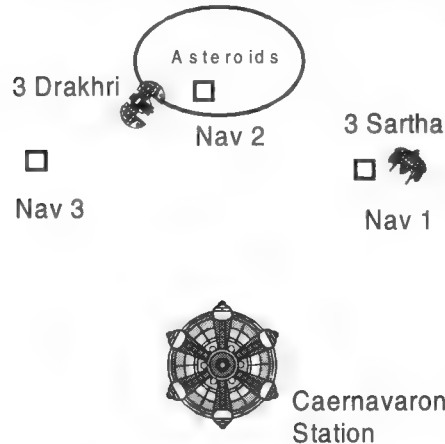


GWENYDD MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Sartha, rocks, 3 Drakhri

Simple patrol, intended to get you used to the new Wing Commander II world. Don't forget that you've got a speed adjustment with Alt-plus or



Alt-minus. The Ferret is very fast and maneuverable; don't run into enemy ships by mistake.

Even though the Sartha and the Drakhri that you see in the map here are analogs of the Salthi and the Dralthi, you've got to learn to take them a lot more seriously than you did the older ships. The Sartha have neutron guns, so they can hurt you,

even if you're in a big ship. And the Drakhri have a triple-laser gun that's not easily ignored either, and the ship is pretty well armored. Think of the Drakhri as more of a replacement for the Krant than for the Dralthi; it's somewhere in between those two.

GWENYDD MISSION 1

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 6 Sartha

This is the mission that gives you a reason to be on the *Concordia*. It's pretty much impossible to blow this mission, particularly since it's not the critical mission here. Afterwards, you find that Angel is the commander of the flight squadron. Angel explains that the *Concordia* is basically in retreat after getting the worst of a conflict with a Fralthra. The Fralthra is seeking the *Concordia* even now, and if the Sartha hadn't been

destroyed, they could have reported the *Concordia's* whereabouts to the Fralthra.

Later, you meet the *Tiger's Claw* veterans, people who weren't killed when the *Claw* was destroyed. Jazz and Doomsday were, of course, back on the *Austin*, as was Angel, since she'd just been transferred there. Paladin had already "re-tired," which explains his surviving the *Claw*. But there's no explanation of how Spirit comes to be still with us. And there's a traitor somewhere around. Kinda makes you wonder, doesn't it?



Caernavaron Station

6 Sartha



Concordia

GWENYEDD MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Sartha, Fralthra, 3 Jalkehi

You escort Broadsword fliers Kilroy and Primetime in Broadwords to attack the Fralthra that nearly did the *Concordia* in before.

Five Sartha can sometimes zap one of the Broadwords, so move quickly to eliminate them. Once the battle

is over, make sure that everyone's shields are at maximum recharge before going on to tackle the Fralthra.



Fralthra



3 Sartha (one piloted by a Drakhai)

3 Jalkehi



Nav 1



Concordia



Once, I happened to fly right next to the Broadswords just as both of them loosed a torpedo at the Fralthra, and I flew alongside the torpedoes to their target. My velocity was set at 500 kps, and I just matched the missile's courses. A coincidence, but it demonstrates an interesting point: Torpedoes travel at 500 kps—they're not very fast.

When you encounter the Jalkehi that you see in the map, you'd better use the afterburner slide, or your poor Ferret—and you—will be nought but ions.

Afterward, you meet Sparks McCullough, a useful source of information and, for a change, a friendly face. Shadow, meanwhile, is talking about you to Angel, who asks if you'd like to transfer to the *Concordia*. She thinks that Tolwyn is a reasonable man, and he'll let you return to the *Concordia* eventually. For now, however, you've got to get back to Gwynedd station.

GWENYEDD MISSION 3

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri and Fralthra, 5 Sartha

You return to Gwenydd station, but before you can even land, a sabo-

teur's bomb disables the *Concordia's* flight deck, making it unable to launch fighters. It's a bad time for that to happen, however, as the carrier is under attack from Drakhri, Sarthas, and a Fralthra.

Caernavaron
Station



Fralthra

4 Drakhri

5 Sartha

Concordia



Since you can't even scorch the paint on the Fralthra with your mass drivers, all you've got to do is to zap the fighters, and stay out of the line of fire be-

tween the *Concordia* and the Fralthra—they exchange antimatter shots

that will destroy your ship instantly. The Fralthra goes up pretty easily, considering how difficult the *Concordia's* last encounter with a Fralthra was supposed to be. Shadow is boxed in and destroyed by two Sartha; you blast the remaining Sartha, and land at the *Concordia*.

Afterward, you and Tolwyn exchange words over Shadow's death. He doesn't like you, but the *Concordia's* got to jump, and he doesn't want to delay the jump just for you. As a result, you're on the *Concordia* for the duration.

NIVEN SERIES (NUMBER 2)

Niven is one of the three "throwaway" serieses in this game. You can eject from every one of the missions, and you'll get the same result as if you protected every Confederation ship and destroyed every Kilrathi ship. The bright side is that you get to fly a new ship—the Broadsword—for one mission.

Ship: Ferret/Broadsword

Wingman: None

Winning criteria: You win no matter what you do in this series, and go to Ghorah Khar (series 3).

NIVEN MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalkehi, 2 Grikath

You meet the *William Tell*, a big gunship that protects the *Concordia*, and is used once later on to attack an enemy capital ship. You patrol the sector looking for traces of enemy ships, in a Broadsword.

In this mission, you meet the Grikath and face more Jalkehi. There are no afterburners on the Jalkehi, so you've got to learn to stand and fight, as well as use your rear turrets. The Broadsword is a tough ship, and can take some beating. Use the ITTS to help you target the forward gun: That three-gun mass driver can take out a Jalkehi with about four solid shots.

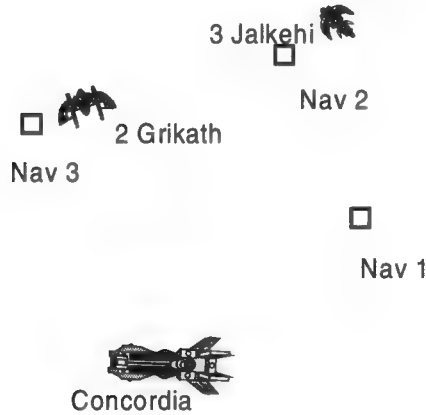


Don't let a ship get behind you, and if one does, move to the rear turrets and blast it with your turret neutron guns.

Your shields recharge so slowly that you've got to stop and recharge

them fully whenever you get a chance. Don't just autonav away from a completed battle, recharge first. If a pack of ships come at you, you can start out by turning from them and running. They tend to bunch up right behind you, becoming easy targets for the rear neutron guns. After you've taken one out, switch to the forward view, swing around, and

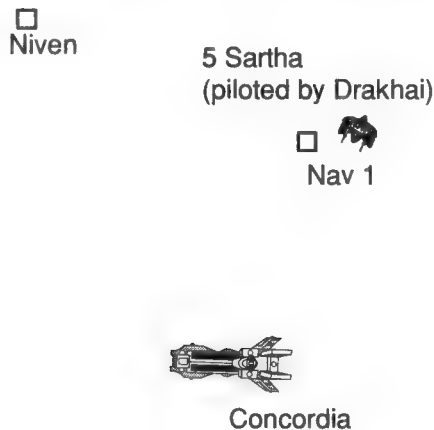
eliminate another. This is particularly effective against Jalkehis, but it can work against Grikaths as well.



NIVEN MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Sartha (Drakhai)



A courier mission to Niven. The five Sartha (Drakhai in particular) that you see in the map here are a bit of a workout, but it's quite do-able. Just keep the after-burners active, lock a target and don't leave it until you kill it, and be on the look-out for a Sartha trying to ram you.

While you're away, a communications officer gets killed by a traitor relaying the *Concordia's* coordinates to a Kilrathi. You're in the clear, but things are heating up. Also, there's a neat planetary landing on Niven.

NIVEN MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Sartha, 3 Drakhri

As you see in the map, you escort the *Bhomis* and the *Excalibur*, two Free Trader-class ships. Your instincts will tell you that if these ships go up in smoke, then you're on the losing path. But it's not true—Niven is a “freebie” system. You can stand there and watch them blow, and you'll still go to Ghorah Khar series 3.

To protect the ships, hit the lead Sartha hard, as it probably won't be firing at you, so hit it right in the face with your mass drivers. Focus on whichever ship is blasting the Traders, and

don't crash against a Trader. When attacking the Drakhri, don't let their triple laser bolts hit you—swerve to avoid them, as you would do with a Jalthi in the earlier games.

Once you're back on the *Concordia*, you hear of the murder. Jazz notes that strange things have begun happening since you arrived.



NIVEN MISSION 3

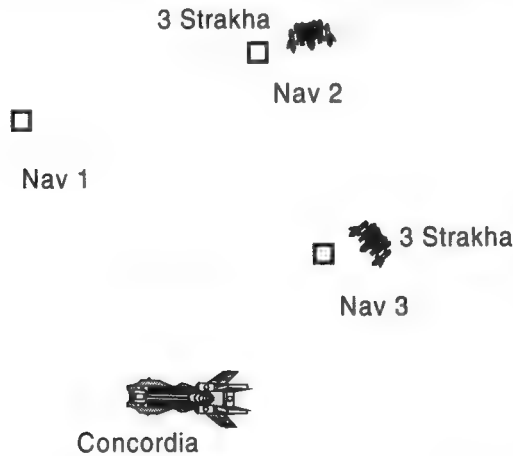
Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Strakha, 3 Strakha



This patrol takes place so that you get to see some stealth fighters. Your flight recorder was, of course, damaged, so you can't prove it to anyone. Even Angel doesn't believe you about the stealth fighters, and in fact evades your question about whether or not she holds you responsible

for the *Claw's* destruction.



Fighting stealth fighters is easy. They've got practically no shields, and they fly in straight lines. Just fire right at them, and you'll blast them. They are, however, very fast, and can ram you if you're not careful.

Afterward, Stingray complains that he's been falsely accused of killing the communications technician. An-

gel explains that the reason why Enigma sector is so important: It contains jump points that could take a ship far away. Even though Sol system is so far away, the Kilrathi could easily attack it if they controlled Enigma.

GHORAH KHAR SERIES (NUMBER 3)

Ghorah Khar is the first Kilrathi planet to join the Confederation. The ConFeds have built a space station, Olympus, to help defend Ghorah Khar. But now the Kilrathi have decided that they want to retake the planet for themselves, and are sending a strike force to the planet. You've got to stop that strike force.

Fortunately, it's not much of a strike force: a Kamekh with an escort. I have no idea why killing Kamekhs is a deciding criterion in so many of these missions, as they're really pretty simple ships to destroy: They're big and slow and don't even have phase shields.

It's clear that Hobbes is a buddy of Paladin's; he sounds just like him. He won't do anything until you tell him to, and when he gets in trouble (which is often), then he just whines nonstop about it. ("I require assistance.") Still, he's better than Doomsday.

Ship: Rapier

Wingman: Hobbes

Winning criteria: Destroy Kamekh in mission 2

If you lose: You go to the Novaya Kiev (number 10) series.

If you win: You go to the Novaya Kiev (number 4) series.

GHORAH KHAR MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalkehi, 4 Grikath (including ace Kur)

Grikath are tough ships to bring down. An ace in a Grikath is something else. You'll have to give it everything you've got to zap Kur. Lots of afterburners, and pick your shots well. You'll be chasing him, so enable the heat seekers.

Later, Hobbes explains that he wants to fly with you because you are an excellent pilot, not deserving of your negative reputation. He says that you are even well-known among Kilrathi for your flying abilities.

Downtown tells you about the Society of Mandarins, a human group desiring that the Kilrathi win the war, so that they can change the Kilrathi from the inside of Kilrathi society.



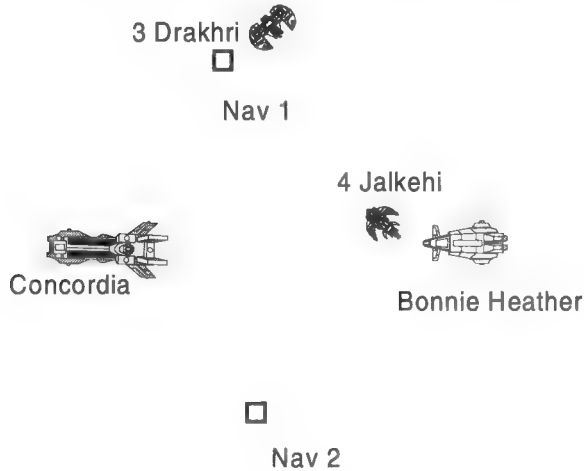


GHORAH KHAR MISSION 1

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Drakhri, 4 Jalkehi

This is called an escort mission, but it's really just a chance to meet with Paladin again. He comes in on the *Bonnie Heather*, a Free Trader ship.



The mission is very simple; the three Drakhri and four Jalkehi that you see in the map should be no big deal. Take all the time that you want, because it is flatly impossible for the *Bonnie Heather* to be killed. Try just flying around, and you'll see that nothing can kill the *Heather*.

Your character doesn't know that Paladin is actually a spy who reports di-

rectly to Tolwyn. Tolwyn doesn't like you, of course, but Paladin puts in a strong good word for you, and has some news about Maniac. Maniac, it seems, happened to be in the right place at the right time, and so got credit for destroying two Ralatha—saving the Deneb sector.

GHORAH KHAR MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Sartha, 3 Grikaths and a Kamekh

The critical mission. Kill the Kamekh that you see in the map, and you've won the series. First, though, don't let Hobbes kill you when he's

going after the Sartha near the *Tiger's Claw*. In general, don't go after any ship that Hobbes is attacking; he pays no attention to your presence, and will destroy your ship if you get in the firing line between him and the ship he's trying to destroy. That goes for the "anonymous" ships as well, the Rapiers that assist Hobbes near the *Tiger's Claw*. Just stay the heck away from the last Sartha, or you'll get chewed up by all three Rapiers.

I find it easiest sometimes to go straight to the task force, skipping the nav point. The Broadwords just get in the way. Otherwise, you'll meet the Clydesdale *Gunga Din* and Broadwords piloted by "Alexa" and "Jaeger." (Very funny, Origin. *Jaeger* in German means *Hunter*. Nice touch, mates.)

So far as I can see, the *Din* is not even under attack, so it disappears quickly, and you get the Broadwords. If you'd like to make this mission a challenge, try to take out the Kamekh while the Grikath are still alive.

Hobbes explains that the reason that he defected was because of the shame of the Kilrathi attitude toward the human war. In the small sense, he tells the story of how he met Downtown, then a human child being abused by a Kilrathi commoner; in the larger sense, he says that the Kilrathi using human slaves is a disgrace.



Olympus
Station

Kamekh

3 Grikath

2 Broadwords

Nav 1

5 Sartha attacking
upon launch

Concordia

GHORAH KHAR MISSION 3

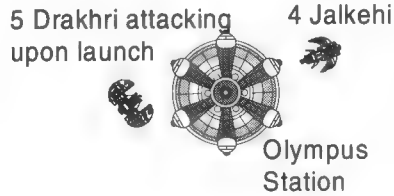
Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: Drakhri, Jalkehi

You defend Olympus on your way out of the station, en route home. You can avoid the second wave that you see in the map, the Jalkehi



wave, if you rout the last Drakhri. Then the trip home is uneventful. Sparks tells you that Hobbes got all the credit for your successes in your missions with him.



Concordia

Meanwhile, Thrakhath gives his cousin Khasra a new task—the destruction of the *Concordia*. Khasra wants to know if Thrakhath will lead them into battle. Thrakhath says that he wants to, but that the Emperor will not let him. “The Emperor has ordered me to the Imperial Palace. My grandfather forbids —,” he begins, but Khasra will not let him finish. The Emperor is a foolish old man, Khasra says. Before

him stands the next emperor of Kilrah, Thrakhath. “You are our future, Prince.” “It will be many years before I take the throne,” Thrakhath answers noncommittally. “Perhaps not that many years,” Khasra replies deviously.

NOVAYA KIEV SERIES (NUMBER 4)

Ship: Broadsword

Wingman: Doomsday

Winning criteria: You win no matter what you do, and then on to Heaven’s Gate.

Paladin’s concerned because the Kilrathi pulled back their forces too quickly; he thinks that they’re up to something. In any case, the reason why we’re at Novaya Kiev is because Ghorah Khar is now safe, and so the *Concordia* is free to handle other matters.

This could be the best series in Wing Commander II.

You fly missions here with Doomsday in a Broadsword. These are interesting missions, a good showcase of the Broadsword's talents. First, you attack a base that's a jump point away, which gives you a chance to re-fuel en route. It's a long mission, and not a simple one. Then you've got to blast two Kamekh in order to rescue Stingray, who's ejected. The third mission is a strike on a Fralthra, and the fourth mission is one of the toughest missions in the game—the communications pod mission. They're all fun, challenging missions.

Which is why it's so odd that none of them count.

You can eject from every one of these missions, and still end up at Heaven's Gate: Go figure. Anyway, I recommend that you ignore the fact that these missions are irrelevant, and don't leave this system until you've successfully completed all four of them!

NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 0

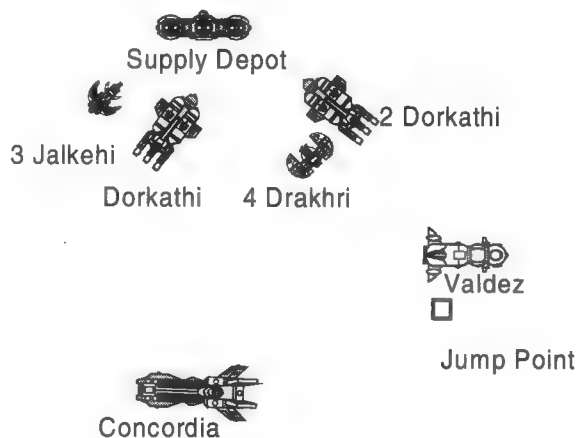
Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri and 2 Dorkathi, 3 Jalkehi, Dorkathi, and Supply Depot

A good challenge for a Broadsword. The four Drakhri can do some real damage to your ship if you don't make good use of your turrets, and you'll need a fully functioning ship to take on the three Dorkathi, three Jalkehi, and the Supply Depot that you see in the map.

Deal with the Jalkehi by staying away from the Supply Depot, and taunt them out to meet you, one by one. Then destroy the

Dorkathi, as you can do that with your guns and needn't waste the tor-pedoes that you need to destroy the Depot. Recharge your shields





whenever you can. By the way, on your trip back, you can request another refuel from the tanker Clydesdale.

NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 1

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalkehi, 5 Drakhri and 2 Kamekh

Here, you're disobeying orders and rescuing Stingray, who's ejected in the middle of an enemy strike force. It is possible to retrieve the ejected pilot without first destroying the enemy, but it's much easier if you toast the Kamekhs first.

Just for fun, you can practice the following quick technique for picking up a pod or pilot. Run at the object at full speed, with your finger on the Backspace key. Just as the object fills your viewscreen, hit Backspace, then F4, then G, then the spacebar—those four keys really quickly—and

you can often grab an item almost "on the fly."



Later, Tolwyn bawls you out for disobeying orders and going out after Stingray. Stingray thanks you, but he's such a jerk about it ("okay, so you choked at the *Tiger's Claw...*") that you tell him to stuff his thanks.

You then have a conversation with Spirit, who's looking at the stars and thinking of Phillip. After 10 years, she's still thinking about her fiancé, who was captured by the Kilrathi? Maybe she's in contact with him, as part of her role as a spy and a traitor. You gotta wonder....

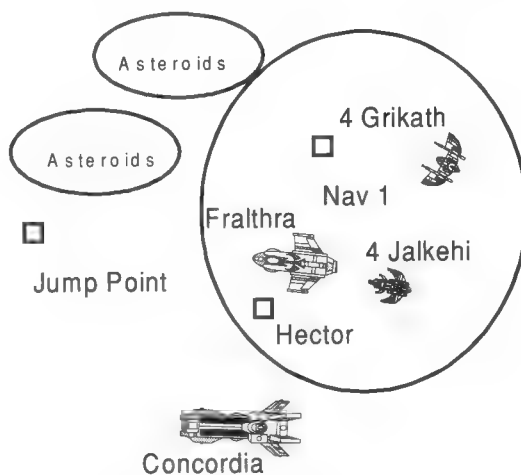
NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalkehi and Fralthra, 4 Grikath

You get to escort the big gunship, the Hector (it's kind of a Confederation Kamekh) on a strike against a Fralthra. Unfortunately, however, the Hector doesn't do anything against the Fralthra (I'm not sure why, but it runs away from the Fralthra), so it's up to you to destroy it. Despite his general uselessness, I find that Doomsday will destroy the Fralthra if you give him a chance. You might want to simply destroy the Jalkehi and then stand back, leaving yourself fresh, undamaged, and ready for the Grikath that you meet on the way back (*grumble, grumble*).

Afterward, the next mission, Heaven's Gate, is discussed over cards. We're going to try to retake or destroy a starbase at Heaven's Gate. Spirit asks Angel if we'll be doing it by ourselves. "You know that I can't talk about that kind of thing," Angel replies. Could Spirit be pumping Angel for information that she could then give to the Kilrathi? Later, you speak with Spirit, alone, and she tells you that she got some e-mail from the traitor. According to Spirit, it "cannot be traced." *Humph!* E-mail in a military vessel that can't be traced? I doubt it. You agree to keep quiet about it, but not for long: The higher-ups should know about this.



NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 3

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Drakhri, 3 Sartha and Ralatha

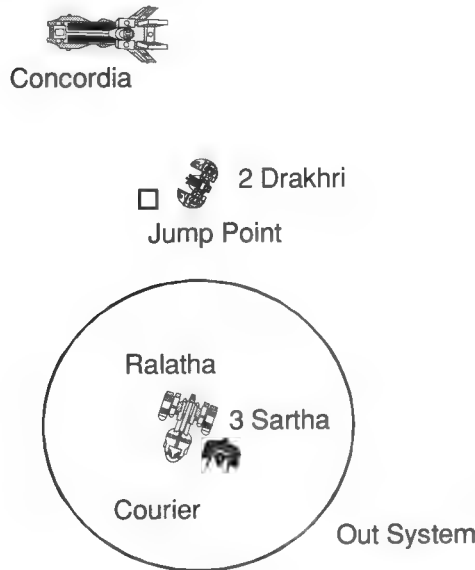
This is called an escort mission because you're supposed to escort a courier ship—it looks like a Free Trader—back to the *Concordia*. The ship is destroyed before you can do anything about it, however, so the real mission here is to retrieve the data pod that the destroyed ship leaves behind. (It's also nice to destroy the Ralatha.)

You fly this solo, which is not all that different from flying with Doomsday.

The really hard part about this mission are the Sartha that attack you as soon as you jump into the area. If you aren't prepared for them, and don't act swiftly, then you'll quickly be dead. Make sure that you're at top speed when you jump, and your shields are in top shape. Once you're in, flip to the rear turret and take out a few Sartha that way—they will line up right behind your ship, making the neutron shots easy. Then switch to the front, and turn your ship around, because the front shields are probably in better shape than are the rear shields.

When moving, you should try to get yourself away from the Ralatha, as its flak guns damage you, and once in a while it will loose its antimat-

ter guns on you, which would be pretty much the end of that mission. If you choose to get the capsule before destroying the Ralatha, then you may want to recharge your shields before returning to fight the big ship. If, on the other hand, you just barely got away from the Sartha that you see in the map, and don't want to zap the Ralatha in order to get the capsule, then practice the four-key tractor beam operation, as mentioned in the earlier mission



in this series. Put your fingers on the Backspace, F4, G, and spacebar keys. Approach the pod at top speed. Just as it's about to disappear—that

is, just as you're going to pass it—then press Backspace, F4, G, and spacebar. You'll probably see the tractor-beam sequence. If not, then just do it again.

HEAVEN'S GATE SERIES (NUMBER 5)

Spirit leaves us at Heaven's Gate.

You fly an Epee, a ship that I don't like very much. It's kind of like a Ferret, but with more speed, better guns, and practically no shields at all. When you get into a scrap, you spend more time dodging bullets than you do in blasting the enemy, and the great speed makes it easy to get yourself into trouble. My recommendation is to use the long arm that the Epee gets from its particle beams, and try to fight things from a distance.

The requirements of this mission are very simple: Just kill the Kamekh in mission 0. The third mission is another chance to run into stealth fighters, and the fourth mission lets you fly a Sabre with Spirit as she kills herself at Heaven's Gate...you see, it turned out that Phillip was being held at Heaven's Gate, and the Kilrathi had promised her that he would die a slow death in retaliation for her not cooperating with them. (Guess I was wrong about her after all.)

Ship: Epee/Sabre

Wingman: Spirit

Winning criteria: Destroy Kamekh in mission 0.

If you lose: You go to Tesla (series 11).

If you win: You go to Tesla (series 6).

HEAVEN'S GATE MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhrai and Kamekh, 4 Sartha



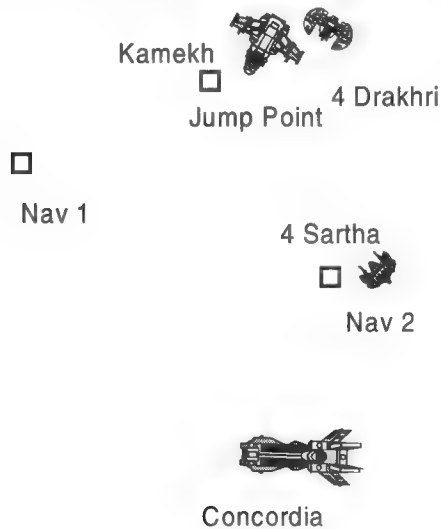
Take this slow until you have the feel for the Epee, or you're likely to die by ramming something. Eliminate the Drakhri, and then make sure you've got a full shield charge. Then drop the speed to about 300, and make a run at the Kamekh. Start firing at 6500 meters, and you will probably ice it on the first pass. If not, just wait a second, as Spirit has gotten a lot better at flying than she was ten years ago. It's hard to kill the Kamekh before Spirit does. The Sartha aren't very difficult, either; just be

sure not to play chicken with them, as their neutron guns will rip right through your tissue-paper shields. As a matter of fact, don't play chicken with anything when you're flying an Epee.

This is the pivotal mission, and once again you've got to ice the Kamekh to continue on the winning path.

Angel tells you that they intercepted a message from the traitor saying that Spirit would not cooperate with the

Kilrathi, despite coercion. Tolwyn thinks that she may be the traitor, and perhaps the message is a decoy. Word's out on her, however, and no one will fly with her but you.



HEAVEN'S GATE MISSION 1

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri, 4 Jalkehi

As you can see from the map, you escort Clydesdales *Palomino* and *Dhalma* to a jump point; that's why this is called an "escort" mission. But nothing happens, and so they jump without trouble.

This is a moderately tough mission mainly because of the weakness of the Epee, but there's nothing to be done about it: Angel's the boss.

Something's going on with Spirit; Angel wants to talk to her...alone.



Jump Point



4 Jalkehi



4 Drakhri

2 Transports



Nav 1

HEAVEN'S GATE MISSION 2

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 3
Strakha, 5 Strakha



Concordia

The *Concordia* is low on missiles, and so the Agincourt is sending us a missile freighter (the *Mama's Boy*, a Clydesdale) full of missiles. This is a vital shipment of missiles, so they send one pilot to escort a missile freighter in an Epee. Does this make sense to anyone around here? I think Angel's got some other things on her mind.

This is a simple escort in that the missile transport is never attacked. The real reason for the mission is so that you can be attacked by more stealth fighters, and of course there's something wrong with your on-board computer, so there's no record of the stealth fighters, and Angel can ridicule your assertions about those fighters.



5 Strakha

Nav 2



Mama's Boy



3 Strakha

Nav 1



Concordia



Try to avoid head-to-head confrontations with the stealth fighters that you see in the map, but it's probably impossible to do that: If they're not shooting right at you, then they're cloaked. Try to take the stealth ships one at a time, and then recharge your shields. If you fly at high speed, and don't maintain a straight course for any appreciable time, then they leave you alone. When you're ready for another confrontation, just fly straight; they'll reappear.

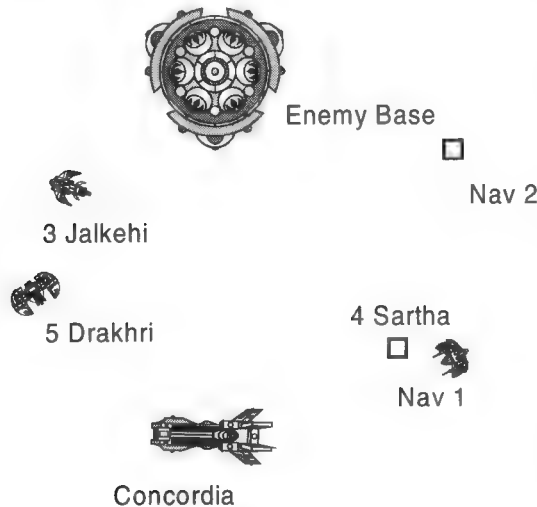
HEAVEN'S GATE MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Sartha (including ace Rakti Blooddrinker), 3 Jalkehi, enemy Starbase, 5 Drakhri

This sounds like a much harder mission than it actually is. Sure, it's an assault on an enemy starbase, but you don't really have to do any work, except take out some fighters. Rakti's a pain in the neck, but if you hit

him with full guns, and a missile or two, then you can put an end to his blood-drinking.



You are warned beforehand that you can't bail out of this mission, as the Kilrathi will get you and kill you if you do. Thus, when Spirit's Sabre is damaged, she cannot bail out, and so makes a kamikaze run at the starbase. There is nothing that you can do about Spirit's suicide. (Nor can you

do anything about being kissed by that prig Angel....) You have better guns and better speed than the Sartha, Drakhri, and Jalkehi that you meet in this mission. Use this mission to get comfortable with the Sabre.

If you eject from this mission, the Kilrathi will kill you.



Afterward, your affair with your commanding officer begins. I've never liked Angel much, but it's a part of the plot, so there's nothing to be done about it. Maybe I can keep her from assigning me to Epees again....

TESLA SERIES (NUMBER 6)

You're still grumbling about Tolwyn, but Sparks makes a good observation: "The Admiral's had plenty of chances to transfer you back if he'd wanted to, sir."

You're with Stingray in Rapiers. He's kind of like Bossman: not a bad flier, but not a great one, either, and he's a mite independent.

Ship: Stingray

Wingman: Rapiers

Winning criteria: You can't lose this series; you go to Enigma from here.

TESLA MISSION 0

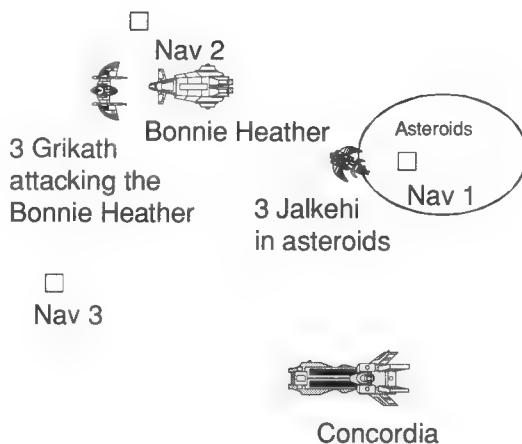
Mission type: Patrol

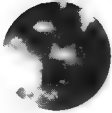
Enemies/obstacles: 3

Jalkehi, rocks, 3 Grikath

This is a patrol mission that becomes another supposed "escort Paladin" mission. (Remember, he's indestructible.) He tags along for the latter part of your patrol.

There's nothing hard about this mission, except that it's a pain fighting ships with rear turrets. Don't knock yourself out protecting Paladin, as the Grikaths can hammer him for days without effect.





Afterward, Ralgha and Paladin are ribbing each other as you, Downtown, and the other two play cards. It turns out that Taggart and Hobbes have known each other since Ralgha's defection ten years ago.

TESLA MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Sartha, 4 Jalkehi, 2 Dorkathi

Two Kilrathi troop transports have accidentally strayed from their convoy. Here's a chance to remove two thousand enemy troops from the war.

The Sartha and the Jalkehi that you see in the map will take their toll, but you can do this mission without too much trouble. Use the afterburners to stay out of the Sartha's gunsights and out of the Jalkehi's rear turret field of fire. Then take your time with the transports; they won't jump out. You won't see the first one initially; it jumps in later.

Meanwhile, at Kilrathi Battle Command, in the M'shrak sector of the Hhallas system, the Prince speaks to his grandfather, the Emperor. The Emperor knows that the Prince has come to ask to fly against the humans. The Prince argues that he must prove himself in battle, to lead warriors

into battle. "Khasra and my cousins shame with their glory and honors!"

"Khasra!" the Emperor retorts. "I have heard enough of Khasra! Your father sought glory, as Khasra does. His ambitions led to his fatal... accident. Your father destroyed the humans at Goddard, but his quest for glory cost an entire strike fleet! Such failures are unacceptable, in an Admiral... or



an Heir. You may go to war, grandson. And as for Khasra, he shall face the *Concordia* pilots, where he may find the... glory... that he seeks. But

if you fail me, as I expect Khasra will, then one of your fifteen cousins will replace you as Heir to Kilrah!"

TESLA MISSION 2

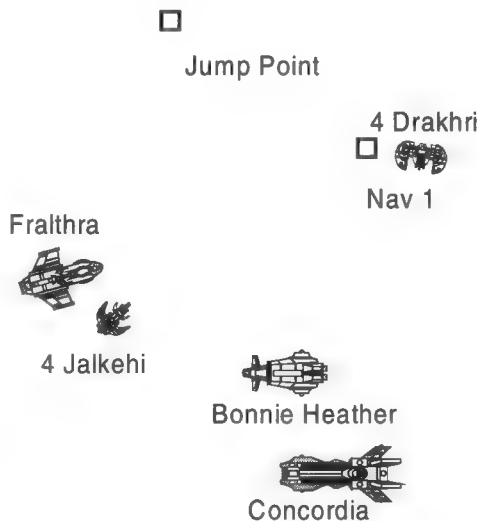
Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri, 4 Jalkehi, including ace Khasra, 2 Fralthi

Paladin needs an escort out of the system, so you volunteer. As you can see in the map, on the way back from the escort, you encounter Khasra, in his Jalkehi, escorting two Fralthra. Destroying Khasra's ship is, of course, difficult, as he's an ace, but the Jalkehi is so slow and cumbersome that all you need do is to stay on the afterburners, and never give him a rest; you'll get him eventually. This would be a good time to use the heat seekers; missiles are good for something.

Taunt the first Jalkehi or two away from the pack, to make your life a bit easier. Try to fight them outside of the flak gun radius of the Fralthra. (Ever wonder why their flak guns affect ConFed ships, and not Kilrathi ships?)

Back at the base, the sudden appearance of those two Fralthi carriers is not good news. They've got to be destroyed, as they're more than a match for the *Concordia*.

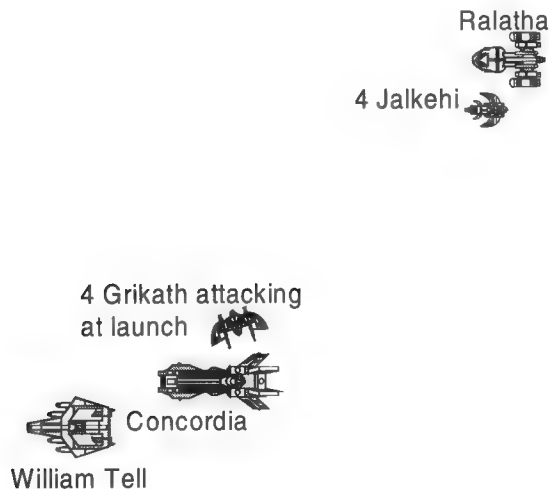




TESLA MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Grikath, 4 Jalkehi



You go after a ship from that strike fleet with the Gilgamesh-class ship *William Tell*. This is a *Concordia* defense mission, followed by a strike on the Ralatha that you see in the map. The *Tell*'s antimatter guns can usually destroy the Ralatha in just one burst.

The advice here is the same as the last mission, as you've got Jalkehis defending a capital ship. Stay out of the flak gun area, and

taunt the Jalkehi defenders out to meet you, where you're one-on-one with no flak guns.

ENIGMA SERIES (NUMBER 7)

This is the only three-mission series in the game. You're back in a Broadsword, doing missions that are somewhat like the ones that you did with Doomsday a few series back. Also, you fly with Angel, who's as much of a pain as she ever was.

Ship: Broadsword

Wingman: Angel

Winning criteria: You must let the Ralatha in the last mission jump out of the system, then follow it and destroy it.

If you lose: You go to the Gwynedd series.

If you win: You go to the K'tithrak Mang series.

ENIGMA MISSION 0

Mission type: Strike and Recon

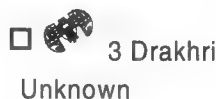
Enemies/obstacles: 3 Drakhri, 3 Sartha, Kamekh

Downtown has been killed, ambushed by 10 Drakhri. Hobbes is distraught. Jazz reveals that he, too, lost a brother to this war, in the Goddard campaign. The reinforcements arrived late, and Goddard died.

The *William Tell*, which was so useful in the last mission, was destroyed. That's a lot of firepower that we've lost to cover our back with. As a result, the *Concordia* will do something daring: a double-jump. By double-jumping, the *Concordia* will throw off its pursuers, and buy a little time for repairs. It's your job to go scout out the *Concordia*'s path, clearing away any enemy ships.

There's another Kamekh, but this one doesn't count towards winning or losing. Be careful of the Sartha that escort the Kamekh—deal with them before going after the corvette. Stop and recharge shields between each battle, as always. Try to run out of the flak radius of the Grikath before you take on the Sartha in earnest. The Kamekh's not going anywhere, so take your time in destroying it.

After the double-jump, the *Concordia* is hiding in the rocks. If the Kilrathi could find the *Concordia* now, that'd be it. Jazz says that a friend in the communications room won't let anyone into the room, and has



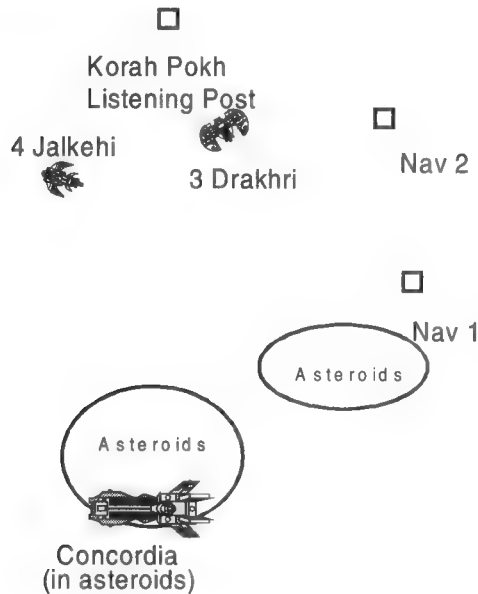


orders to “shoot to kill.” Interesting that Jazz knows how hard or easy it would be to get into the communications room, isn’t it?

ENIGMA MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: Rocks, 3 Drakhri, 4 Jalkehi, and Listening Post



Standard strike mission, but the target is a tough one in that it, like the big capital ships, takes two torpedoes to destroy. You only have four torpedoes, so bring them in as close as you can before you release them, or the post’s flak guns may get the torpedo. Angel will almost certainly manage to blow her ship up, so you can get some tractor beam practice as well, even though she won’t give you credit for having rescued her.

ENIGMA MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: Rocks, 5 Jalkehi, and Ralatha

A pivotal mission; you don’t get to K’tithrak Mang without winning it. There’s a small strike force (Jalkehis and a Ralatha) that we’ll scare into returning to K’tithrak Mang. We’ll then follow them on the jump, and discover the coordinates of the enemy base itself!

This mission can be tough. The first suggestion that I'd make is that you be very careful when you turn your ship around Angel. She tends to follow very closely, and a quick turn will probably make your ships crash. Second, there isn't anything at the nav point inside the asteroids, so you might as well avoid it altogether. Just fly a bit to the left of the navigational cross, and you'll be able to autonav right to the strike force. The preponderance of rocks in this mission is really annoying.

Third, taunt the Jalkehis out; there's no point in rushing the fight, as you want the Ralatha to jump away.

Once the Jalkehi are zapped, you'll get a cinematic message from Angel, and then you both jump to follow the Ralatha, and then kill it. You can sometimes sit about 10,500 meters away, just outside of his flak gun radius, and target the torpedo. Then you can just run right in and drop the torpedo. Once in a while, you can even launch from 10,500 meters away, and the Ralatha doesn't turn on the flak guns. Then you can just sit a good distance away, and destroy him like that. Ralatha usually require two torpedoes to destroy them.



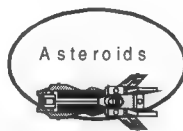
Ralatha



4 Jalkehi



Nav 1

Concordia
(in asteroids)

K'TITHRAK MANG SERIES (NUMBER 8)

This is the last series on the winning path of Wing Commander II, but it's different from previous final series (for Wing Commander I and Secret Missions) because you are not preordained to win once you're in this system, unlike the Venice system in Wing Commander I.



Like other serieses on the winning path, there is only one goal that you must fulfill in order to win this series: You've got to destroy the base at K'tithrak Mang.

Here you are, back in K'tithrak Mang, ten years later. Same mission, different ship. The last time, you met with failure and death of many loved ones. With knowledge of the stealth fighters, you could be ready for that threat...but still no one believes that they exist; Jazz ridicules you for your stories, asking if we're supposed to believe next that you've seen Santa Claus.

And, speaking of Jazz, you fly with him on these missions, or rather with him on two of the missions. You fly Sabres, which are fast, tough ships that include shipkiller torpedoes—the perfect ship for a strike on a capital ship or an enemy base. Its mass-driver/particle-beam combination makes for a powerful punch close in, and the particle beams themselves give you a long reach with solid hit capability.

Ship: Sabre

Wingman: Jazz

Winning criteria: Destroy the enemy base at K'tithrak Mang

If you lose: You lose the game.

If you win: You win the game.

K'TITHRAK MANG MISSION O

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalkehi (Drakhai) and Ralatha, 3 Grikath

This is a strike on a Ralatha. Drakhai Jalkehi are tough to put out of action—tougher than the Ralatha, in fact, as Jazz usually torpedoes the Ralatha before you even get a chance to do it in. As you can see in the map, Grikaths await you back at the *Concordia*, so make sure that you're not too chewed up on your way home.

Even though you've got a rear turret, do not use it. By now, you're accustomed to using the rear turret on the Broadsword, confident that you can blast an attacker for a while with your neutron guns, because the

Broadsword has so much shielding that you can take a beating for a while and not sustain damage. That's not true with a Sabre. If you let someone trail you and blast your hindsection, you'll take some real damage, real fast. Kill the Jalkehi by targeting one Jalkehi and then using afterburners to stay on it, using full guns to beat it down. Always stay just off to the side of the rear, rather than right behind it. You cannot beat a Jalkehi Drakhai if you allow it to hit you with its neutron guns; the Drakhai shields are just too tough, and it'll chew you up before you even get a chance to do any serious work on the Jalkehi. Remember, you've got Grikaths waiting for you back at the *Concordia*.

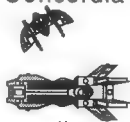
Ralatha



4 Jalkehi
(piloted by Drakhai)

If you must attack the Ralatha, as you will if Jazz's ship is destroyed, or if he runs back to base, then bear in mind that you have just two torpedoes, and it will take both of those torpedoes to destroy the Ralatha. You can't afford to lose either torpedo to the flak guns. Here's one fairly reliable method of destroying the Ralatha.

3 Grikath attack upon
return to Concordia



Concordia

First, fly out around 11,300 meters from the Ralatha. That's far enough out that you can target it—and get your torpedoes locked—but too far for his flak guns to target you. Turn off the engines, and sit out there long enough for the torpedo to lock onto the Ralatha's phase shields. Then turn up the speed as far as it'll go and run on into that Ralatha. Release the torpedo at about 1800 meters, and it'll pretty much always get to the target. Then zip out of range (afterburners!) and do it again. You'll be rewarded with a "No!" from the Ralatha.

When back at the *Concordia*, attack the Grikaths from a good ways away. Target the rear Grikath, and lock the target so that the ITTS will tell you to where to fire. One or two solid gun capacitor discharges should destroy it. Then there are just two more of the Grikath; they're so busy



trying to destroy the *Concordia* that they may not even fire on you while you blast them. For some reason, the third one seems to just disappear sometimes when you destroy the first two.

Afterward, Jazz is on your case again, about Angel this time. You tell him to get off your back; he replies that it's "just his way," he guesses.

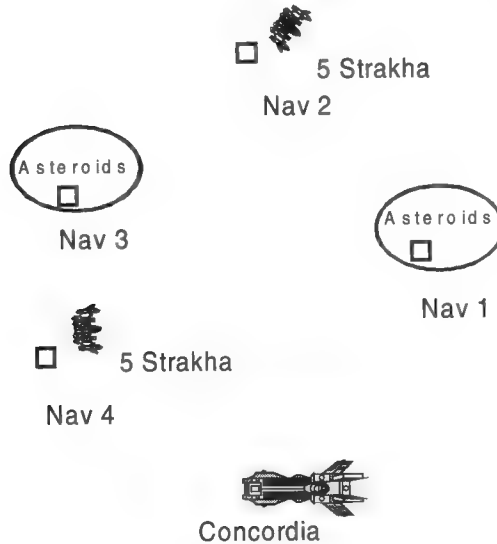
K'TITHRAK MANG MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Strakha, 5 Strakha

Stealth fighters again, but this time, your flight recorder isn't damaged. You're asked to patrol an asteroid field; Jazz reminds us that the last time that you got to do that in K'tithrak Mang, it caused the loss of

the *Tiger's Claw*. Angel tells him to shut up; clearly, Jazz didn't want you to fly this mission.



As you see in the map, there are two small asteroid fields in nav points that you've got to fly into. Treat the Strakha as you always do: Remember that they're fast, but they have weak shields. Blast them with dual guns, but don't let them ram you—swing aside as they fly by. Lock them with your targeting computer; the ITTS

marker remains even after they've stealthed themselves. You can skip the asteroid fields if you like; the action's at nav 2 and nav 4.

You bring the evidence to Angel, who rushes it to Tolwyn. You and Angel plan to celebrate, after your patrol; while you're out there, she debriefs Jazz, who confesses that he's the traitor.

"I've still got your lover-boy's flight disk, sort of a souvenir." Angel tries to call Security, but Jazz brandishes a blaster, telling her to freeze. "Why, Zack?" Angel asks.

Jazz answers that when the *Tiger's Claw* detoured on the trip to Goddard to attack an enemy troopship; that delayed the arrival of the *Claw* at Goddard just enough that the colony was doomed, including his brother. Then Jazz grabs a Sabre and runs to the protection of his Kilrathi friends!

K'TITHRAK MANG MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: Rocks, Jazz in Sabre

I have no idea why there's a nav point in the middle of the rocks; it certainly doesn't contain enemies. I just fly to the left of it for a while, and then eventually I get far over enough that I can just autonav straight to the jump point, where I engage Jazz.

Jazz is certainly a worthy opponent, but all you've got to do is just lock him so that you get the ITTS help on targeting, keep in your sights, and just keep wearing him down until he ejects.

His ejection chair floats before you in your sights, and you are just about ready to finish the job. "Don't kill me, please! You need me to prove your innocence. I can..." he pleads.

"Not an option," you reply and go to squeeze the trigger, when Angel swoops in and grabs Jazz with her tractor beam. "Justice is decided in the courts, not with particle beams," she says. (See what I mean? A prig.)



Jump Point



Jazz in Sabre



Concordia



Sparks later tells you that they've found all the evidence in Jazz's quarters; you're cleared.

K'TITHRAK MANG MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Strakha, Prince Thrakhath, 4 Sartha (Drakhai), K'tithrak Mang

Finally, the strike that should have happened ten years ago. A chance to attack the base at K'tithrak Mang!

Unfortunately, you won't get to be part of it; instead, you're flying a forward patrol prior to the attack. These are the Admiral's express orders; I guess the old buzzard doesn't like eating crow over your innocence, and so he'll take it out on you if he can. That's no problem, however. Just talk

to Sparks, get some torpedoes, and the disk with the navigation data to K'tithrak Mang. "Oh, and don't mention this to my wingman, okay?" you say. "You sure about this?" she says. "Janet, the Colonel's wanted me off his ship since Caernarvon. Now I'm going to give him a reason."



Once you're in flight, Major Edmonds, the communications officer, orders you back to base. You don't even

bother pretending that there's noise on the comm channel. "You know me better than that, Major," you say.

As with the Jazz mission, there's no reason to go through the silly rocks that you see in the map; just fly to the left of the navigational cross for a while, and then you can autonav to K'tithrak Mang.

Once you get there, the Prince himself decides that he's had enough of your meddling, and decides to destroy you personally. Handle this just as you did the Jazz dogfight. Lock the target and keep him in your sights; he'll keep trying to get out of your sights, so you'll end up chasing his tail, and you can wear away at him gradually. By bypassing the rocks, you also bypass the Strakha; no loss. After you destroy the Drakhai Sartha, K'tithrak Mang will be easy—you've got six torpedoes, and just two will do the job. Blast K'tithrak Mang as you did the Ralatha in the first mission.

Afterward, you're finally vindicated and promoted to Colonel. Tolwyn says he's proud to serve with you, and all seems well with the world: Terra now holds Enigma!

After the credits roll, we see Thrakhath's ejection chair drifting in space. "I will return," he vows. He is retrieved from space by a Kamekh.

GHORAH KHAR SERIES (NUMBER 9)

The Ghorah Khar series 9, Novaya Kiev series 10, Tesla series 11, and Gwynedd series 12 are series on the losing path of Wing Commander. If you were unable to destroy the Fralthra in the previous series, then that's how you got here.

Unlike Wing Commander I, there's really nothing interesting in the losing series, and no missions of any particular note, so these write-ups will not be as long.

All of the series in the losing path require that you fulfill two mission goals in order to get back on the winning track; that's why it's probably smarter to just go back and replay the previous series. In the case of this series, you've got to destroy a Dorkathi in mission 0, and destroy a Kamekh in mission 2.

Ship: Ferret/Broadsword

Wingman: None

Winning criteria: Destroy the Dorkathi in mission 0 and the Kamekh in mission 2.



If you lose: You lose the game.

If you win: You go to the Ghorah Khar (number 3) series.

GHORAH KHAR MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalkehi and Dorkathi, mines

The intro on this is basically the same as the intro for the Niven courier mission. The only tough part of this mission is zapping the Dorkathi, as the Dorkathi is defended by three Jalkehi, and you don't have too



Field HQ

much time to destroy the Dorkathi before it jumps out. Complicating the mission is the fact that you're working near a mine field—the only one in Wing Commander II—so you are even further constrained in your movements.

The fact that you're flying a Ferret makes your choice of weapons easy; you only have mass drivers. Fly quickly in circles around the

Dorkathi, strafing it and keeping out of the clutches of the Jalkehi. Then try to lure the Jalkehi out of the minefield, once you've destroyed the Dorkathi mine layer.

GHORAH KHAR MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri

When you return from your Ghorah Khar courier mission, you encounter a transport—the *Sable Star*—under attack by Drakhri. You can actually stand there and watch, as the *Sable Star* seems to be another one of those indestructible ships. Alternatively, you can just fly straight home, and your debriefing will say that you saved the *Sable Star*.

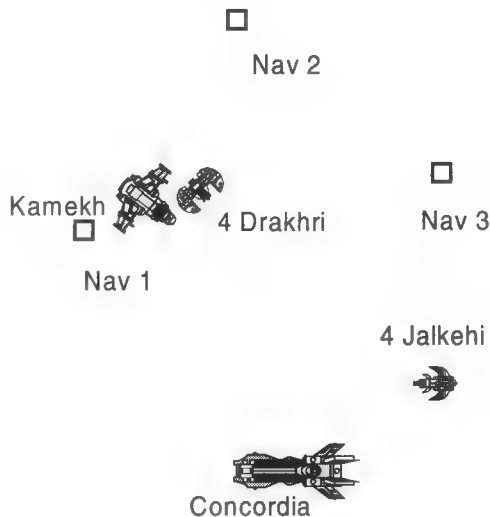


GHORAH KHAR MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri and a Kamekh, 4 Jalkehi

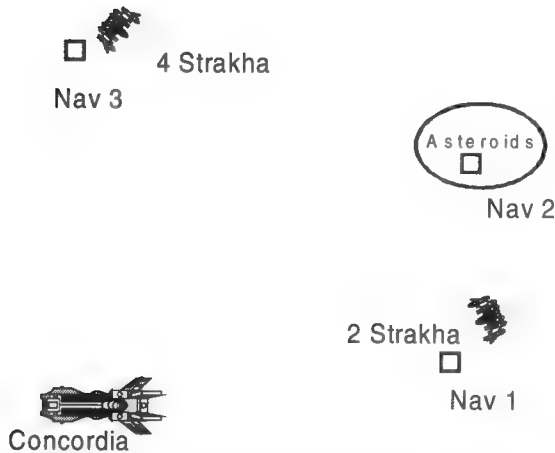
This is like the third mission in the other Ghorah Khar series (number 3), except that the enemy escorts of the Kamekh are different (Drakhri, not Sartha). As Drakhri are easier to destroy from a Broadsword than are Sartha, I guess that makes it an easier mission. In any case, you'll get to fly this mission again if you get this one right, because you'll progress from here to series 3 if all goes well. Once you get the Kamekh alone—once the Drakhri are dead—then you can make passes at it by flying in circles. First come at it with your mass drivers, then once the forward shields are depleted, then swing around and give





it the neutron guns. Once the rear shields are damaged, take a turn with the forward guns again, and so on.

If this is your first Broadsword mission, go take a look at the notes for the third mission in series 3.



GHORAH KHAR MISSION 3

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 2
Strakha, 4 Strakha

Another one of those patrols where you see stealth fighters (see the map) and report them to Angel, but your flight recorder is damaged, so you can't substantiate your story. See the notes

for the fourth Niven mission, as this mission is essentially the same as that mission.

NOVAYA KIEV SERIES (NUMBER 10)

This is the "losing" version of series 4, Novaya Kiev. I'm not quite sure how to actually get here, as it's just about impossible to lose Olympus station.

Wingman: Doomsday

Ship: Broadsword

Victory Conditions: You must destroy the Fralthra in mission 0 and you must retrieve the data pod in mission 3.

If you lose: You lose the game.

If you win: You go to the Heaven's Gate series.

NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 0

Mission type: Escort/Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Drakhri, 3 Jalkehi and Ralatha

You accompany Doomsday, Dart, and Mangler on a strike against a Ralatha. It's not very tough as you know that between the four of you, somebody will get the Ralatha that you see in the map. Don't get cocky around the Jalkehi, however—they'll often get one of the Broad-swords if you don't move fast; heck, these guys fly so badly that sometimes the Drakhri will get them.



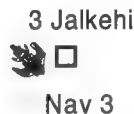
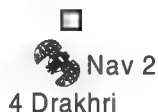
The Jalkehi are pretty dumb in this scenario. It seems that one of them crashes into the Fralthra early on, reducing the number that you've got to handle to three.

NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri, 4 Jalkehi, rocks

Your basic patrol. This is obviously just a filler mission. It's like the second mission on the other Novaya Kiev series, except you don't





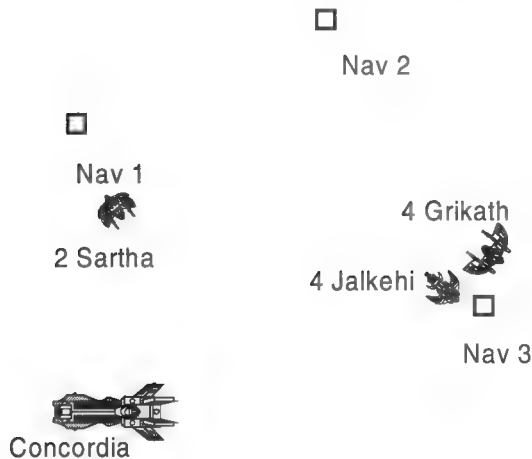
have to rescue Stingray, and there's a slightly different cast of bad guys.

NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Sartha, 4 Jalkehi, 5 Grikath

Another patrol, a tough one. Sartha are bad enough, but there's only two of them. Hit them fast and don't let them chew down your shields and get into your armor. Then regenerate your shields completely before moving on.



The Jalkehi that you see in the map are mean, but stupid. Hammer them with your tail guns; they'll just sit there and fire at you while you fire at them. Then run and recharge, and come back to fight some more.

Grikaths are faster, and their sting is in missiles more than guns. Keep your chaff pods ready for this fight, then lock a Grikath

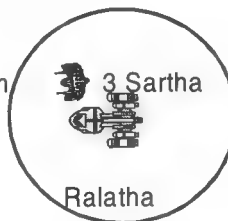
and just keep hitting it until it's dead. You probably won't have to fight them all; they'll scatter after a few die, but be ready to take them all on. Use the turrets if they swarm around you.

NOVAYA KIEV MISSION 3

This is the exactly the same as the other Novaya Kiev mission; see that write-up for discussion.



Out-system



TESLA SERIES (NUMBER 11)

You get here if you messed up Heaven's Gate, not destroying the Kamekh in the first mission, or if, through a nearly-impossible set of circumstances, you don't destroy the enemy starbase. As with the other Tesla, you fly with Stingray in a Rapier.

Wingman: Stingray

Ship: Rapier

Victory conditions: You must destroy the Ralatha in mission 1, and you must defend the *Concordia* in mission 2.

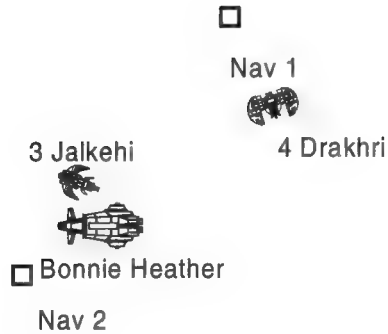
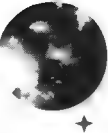
If you lose: You lose the game.

If you win: You go to the Enigma series.

TESLA MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol/Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalkehi, Drakhri



As you can see from the map, this is another mission where you get to escort Paladin in the *Concordia*. Again, take your time with the Jalkehis, as there is nothing that can happen to the *Heather*. As in the other Tesla mission, you have words with Angel about her protecting you now that you're having an affair.



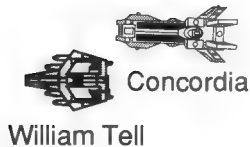
Concordia

Afterward, you find out that Tesla station has been destroyed, and the strike force is still around...menacing the *Concordia*.

TESLA MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Sartha, 5 Jalkehi and a Ralatha



4 Sartha



5 Jalkehi

Ralatha

Let's go get that strike force, or whatever's left in-system. You escort the *William Tell*, as in the final mission in the other Tesla series, to attack a capital ship. As the Drakhai Sartha that you see in the map can really chew you up, take them slow, run away after each one, and recharge your shields and guns before taking the next one on. I think

the *Tell* is indestructible, so don't rush defending it. And stay out the way of the *Tell*; it and the Ralatha lob antimatter bursts at each other that can

destroy you instantly if you accidentally catch one of those bursts.

TESLA MISSION 2

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalkehi, 6 Grikath

A *Concordia* defense. Taking out 10 ships without rear guns is no mean feat. Take out the Jalkehi with full guns and afterburner slides, then rush out and meet the Griks on their way in, so there's only five Grikath taking on the *Claw*.

There are no tricks here, just good flying, and in a *Rapier*, it's really tough to kill all 10 ships. If Stingray's having a good day, however, then he'll kill a couple, and some of the Grikaths seem to just disappear sometimes.

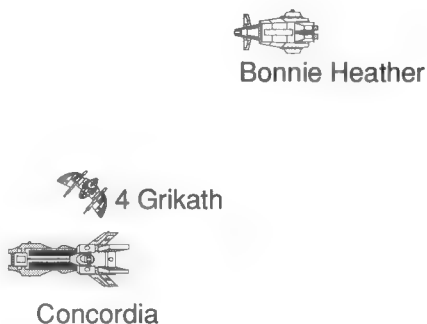


TESLA MISSION 3

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalkehi, 4 Grikath

The tension on the *Concordia* is making tempers a bit short. While talking to you, Hobbes, and Downtown in the lounge before the mission begins, Jazz manages to insult all of you with dazzling precision. Of course, he doesn't retire entirely unscathed—I





think that Jazz has not made himself very popular on this carrier.

Originally, the mission briefing begins with the assignment of routine patrols, but an emergency communication interrupts the briefing and Angel changes the orders. You and Stingray are to defend the *Concordia* as it retreats, then escort the *Bonnie Heather* to the jump point, then rendezvous with the *Concordia* on its way to the jump point.

The mission doesn't have any real surprises attached. As you can see from the mission map, you've got 4 Grikaths attacking the *Concordia* as you emerge, but, when you've dispatched them, Paladin awaits you unmolested. You don't see any more bad guys until you get to the 4 Jalkehi at the jump point.

GWENYDD SERIES

If you didn't follow the Ralatha, then you don't know where the base at K'tithrak Mang is. As a result, you drop back to Gwenydd Station, where you can still win the game. (It's an odd game tree. Here you are, basically in this game's version of Hell's Kitchen, and you can turn the whole sector around with just one battle.) You fly with Jazz, and two of the missions are just about identical to missions 1 and 2 of the K'tithrak Mang series, although the dialogue between you and Jazz when you're just about to blow him to atoms is a little different.

Wingman: Jazz

Ship: Sabre

Victory conditions: Destroy the Fralthra in the first mission, and destroy the strike force in the last mission.

If you lose: You lose the entire game.

If you win: You win the entire game.

GWENYDD MISSION 0

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Grikath, 4 Drakhri, 3 Jalkehi and 2 Fralthra

You've got to destroy two Fralthra, not a simple task. The fun starts right after you launch, and, as you see in the map, four Grikath attack the *Concordia*. Zap the Jalkehi, using afterburners and full guns to make sure that their rear guns don't chew you up. That's very important, because if you take any damage, then it could be to the targeting computer. If your targeting computer gets damaged, then you can't lock torpedoes and destroy the Fralthra.

Finally, take on the Fralthra, one at a time.

Between you and Jazz, you've got 12 torpedoes, and it'll only take four of them to blast the two Fralthra, so it's possible to get the job done; but make no mistake about the fact that it's going to be tough. I flew this one several times before I finished it, and you can't just skip it—it's essential.

4 Grikath attacking
upon launch



Concordia

4 Drakhri

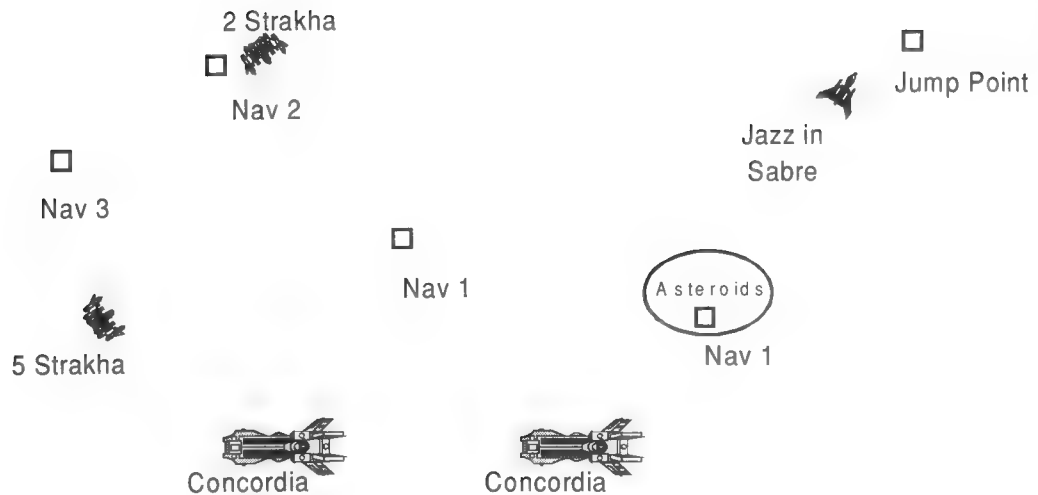


Nav 1

3 Jalkehi



2 Fralthra



GWENYDD MISSIONS 1 AND 2

See missions 1 and 2 of the K'tithrak Mang series. Mission 1 is shown on the left, and mission 2 on the right.

GWENYDD MISSION 3

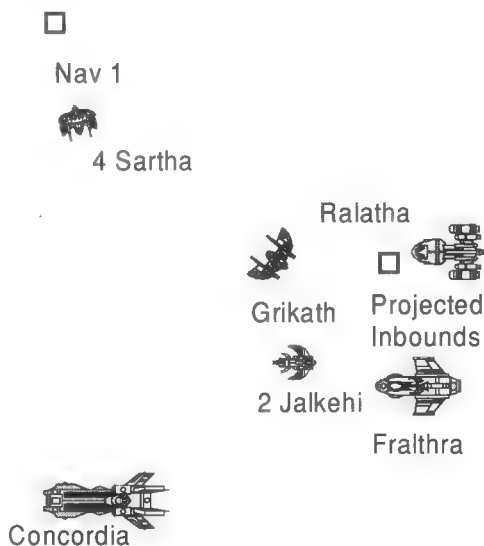
Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Sartha, Prince Thrakhath, 2 Jalkehi and Fralthra and Ralatha

This is actually an easier mission than the first one. As before, get rid of the Sartha quickly, and don't let them hurt your targeting subsystem. Use the afterburners, lock targets with ITTS so that you know where to shoot in order to hit them, and don't fly in a straight enough line that the Sarthas can get behind you. If you're damaged after the Sartha encounter, then abort the mission.

If not, then go on to handle Prince Thrakhath, whose reputation exceeds his abilities. See K'tithrak Mang mission 3's write-up for comments on the Prince. The three Jalkehi that you see in the map are not difficult, but be sure that your shields are all charged up before you deal with them. After you've toasted the Prince, there's a tendency to have your adrenaline flowing, and to wade right into the Jalkehi, but don't do it until you're ready. Then handle the Fralthra and Ralatha as you've done in the past.

Whether you finish in K'tithrak Mang or Gwenydd, you may be rewarded in the end by the sight of Thrakhath floating in space, vowing to return. Now, when the bad guys vow to return, it always sounds kind of pathetic, don't you think? Well, we'll find out, in Special Operations 1....



**THE MISSIONS
OF SPECIAL
OPERATIONS 1**



E L E V E N



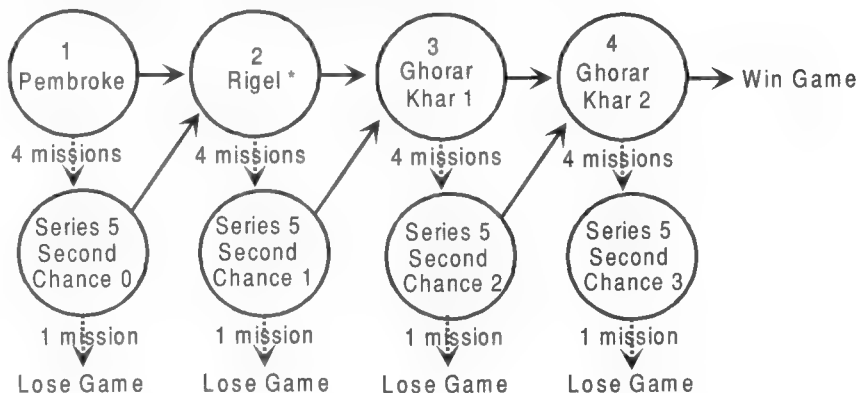
Just as Wing Commander I created a demand for Secret Missions, Wing Commander II demands—and is improved by—Special Operations. Special Operations 1 and 2 not only add a bunch of new and interesting missions for Wing Commander aficionados, they also extend the Wing Commander story.

GAME OVERVIEW

In this story, you become a spymaster for the Confederation, resolve a mutiny, test-fly a new ship, and go head-to-head with Prince Thrakhath himself.

Like Secret Missions, this game has a fairly linear game map, as you see here.

As with Wing Commander II, there are four missions in each series, and a critical mission goal in each series. If you fail that goal, however, you needn't play an entire new series to get back on the winning track; instead, you play just one mission, and if you win that one, then you're back on track; if you lose it, then the game's over.



*Note: In the Rigel Series you must win Mission 3, or else the game is over. If you lose Mission 2, you continue to Second Chance 1.

—————→ Win
→ Lose



PEMBROKE SERIES

In the game's opening, Thrakath drifts in space, vowing that he will return. He is retrieved by a Kamekh. Later, he talks to Khasra, telling him that he (Khasra) will lead the assault on the rebels at Ghorah Khar, a Kilrathi world that has aligned itself with the Confederacy. Khasra replies that being the first wave to attack Ghorah Khar would be suicide.

Thrakath bristles at Khasra's questioning of his orders. Khasra replies that, after the defeat at K'Tithrak Mang, Thrakath should not be in command of the battle fleet, and Khasra cannot understand why he (Thrakath) is still in command of the fleet.

"Perhaps the Emperor favors me because I have not attempted to murder him, Khasra. You will carry out my orders, or you will die...as a traitor." (Thrakhath here is referring to the conversation in the last game, where he suggested that the Emperor should be killed so that Thrakhath could run the Empire.)

Admiral Tolwyn tells you that you've been promoted to Colonel. You're being transferred temporarily to Special Operations. You find that Paladin is actually still in uniform, but as head of Intelligence and Special Operations in the Enigma sector. "And I expect you to follow his orders better than you've followed mine!" Only a few people will know that you're a spy; most will think that you're on R&R. Before then, however, you'll do some normal patrols.

As in Wing Commander II, the game takes place in the Enigma sector.

Now that the Confederation has won Enigma, we must consolidate the victory by holding Pembroke. Pembroke is the jump nexus between the Enigma and Vega sectors, so holding onto Vega will be easier if we hold onto Pembroke. For this series, you'll fly the new, improved P-64D Super Ferrets. The P-64Ds have heat seekers and "new control systems," whatever that means.

Wingman: Stingray

Ship: Ferret

Victory Conditions: Touch the nav points in mission 3.

If you lose: You go to series 5, mission 0.

If you win: You go to the Rigel series.

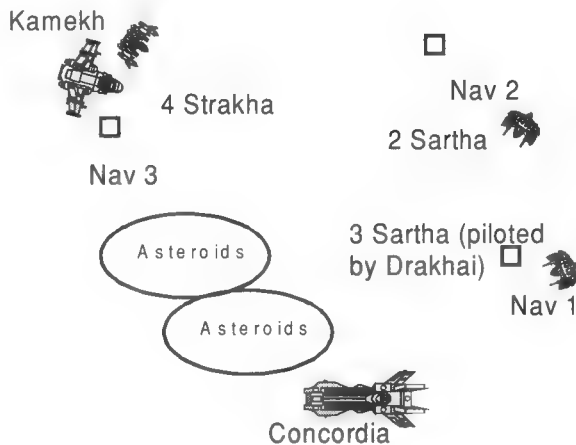
PEMBROKE MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3
Sarthas (Drakhai), 2
Sarthas, 4 Strakha,
1 Kamekh

This is just one of those basic patrol missions that seem to always start these games. You needn't destroy the Kamekh that you see in the map to win the series, but it's always fun to destroy a capital ship, and Kamekhs are all bark and little bite, so go for it.

Afterwards, you hear that the TCS *Tsiolkovsky* is missing. It's a scientific research vessel that you met in Secret Missions 2.

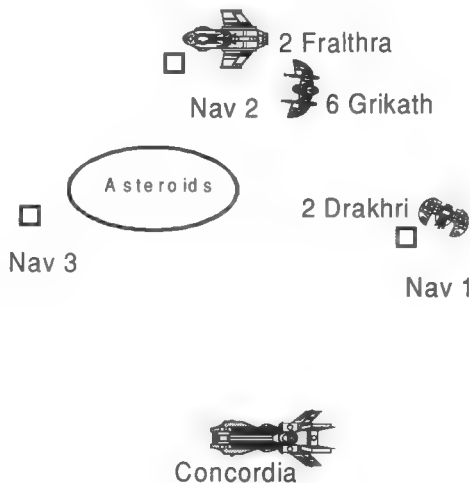


PEMBROKE MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 2
Drakhri, 6 Grikath, 2
Fralthra, rocks

Another patrol. As you see in the map, you encounter two Fralthra, but you can't destroy them, as you lack ship-killer torpedoes, so



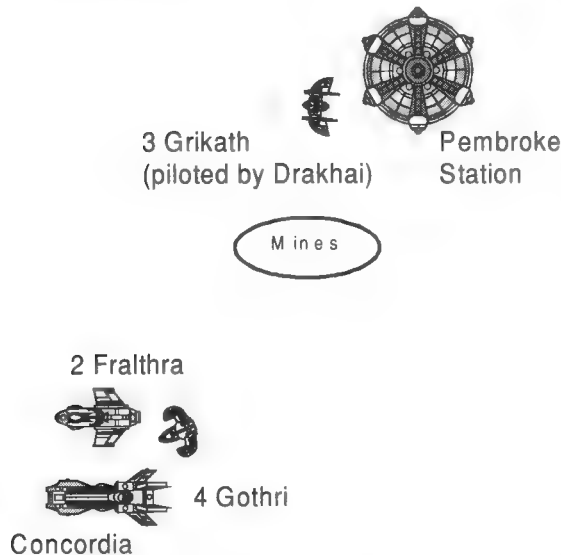
your main job is to get back to the *Concordia* fast, and report the two incoming Fralthra.

PEMBROKE MISSION 2

Mission type: Defend

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Gothri, 2 Fralthra, mines, 3 Grikath (Drakhai)

As you can see in the map, the Fralthra are upon the *Concordia*. You use a Sabre to destroy the fighters, while the *Concordia* destroys the Fralthra.



You first defend the *Concordia* while it takes on two Fralthra. Plus, you get to meet the Gothri, a heavy fighter that you'll learn to hate. Then, you, Stingray, and Doomsday proceed to Pembroke Station, defend it, and return to the *Concordia*.

The first time I flew this, I basically had no clue about what to do. Those Gothri are scary. Treat them like Grikath, only tougher. There really is no secret to surviving an encounter with Gothri, except the usual: Use full guns, get in close to him them, lock a target and attack it until it's dead, and use the afterburner slide—don't let those rear guns get you.

And stay out the path between the *Concordia* and the Fralthras—if those antimatter guns get you, you're dead.

Afterwards, you play cards with some of the other pilots and tell them that your "R&R" will begin after the *Concordia* jumps to the Rigel system.

PEMBROKE MISSION 3

Mission type: Patrol

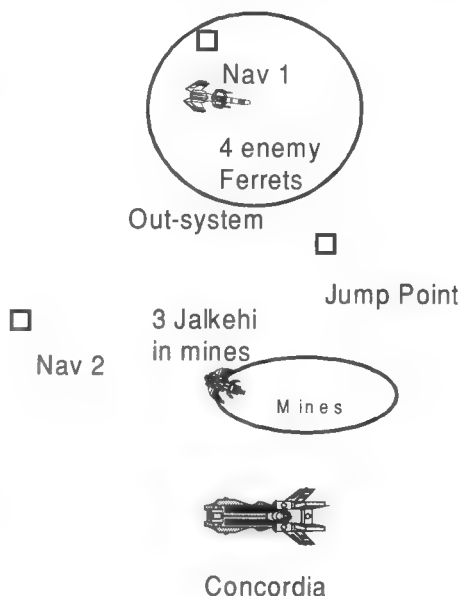
Enemies/obstacles: Mines, 3 Jalkehi, 4 Ferrets

Speaking of the Rigel system...we've lost contact with a supply depot in a neighboring system, the Rigel system. The *Concordia*'s got to jump in, and find out what's going on. You are to clear jump points prior to the jump to Rigel, jump to Rigel and clear Rigel system, then return to the *Concordia*.

You fly a Broadsword with-out a wingman. The three Jalkehi in the mines are pretty rough; I'd recommend trying to lure them outside of the mines. Once you do jump to Rigel, you get a surprise: You're attacked by Confederation ships—Ferrets!

It is very important in this game to touch the nav points. As a matter of fact, all you must do to win this series is to touch the nav points on this mission. For some reason, the Ferrets destroy themselves if you ignore them; I think it's because they bunch up too much, and take each other out with the crossfire.

Afterward, you report to Tolwyn about the enemy Ferrets. Tolwyn tells you of a report a few weeks ago, where pilots of the TCS *Gettysburg* staged a mutiny near N'Tanya. N'Tanya, we hear, is one of three worlds (including K'arakh and Shariha) fighting to join the Confederation.





RIGEL SERIES

In this series, you resolve the situation caused when the *Gettysburg*, a Waterloo-class ship, mutinied and became a pirate ship.

Wingman: None

Ship: Epee

Victory Conditions: You must get to the *Gettysburg* (mission 2) and destroy the pirate base (mission 3).

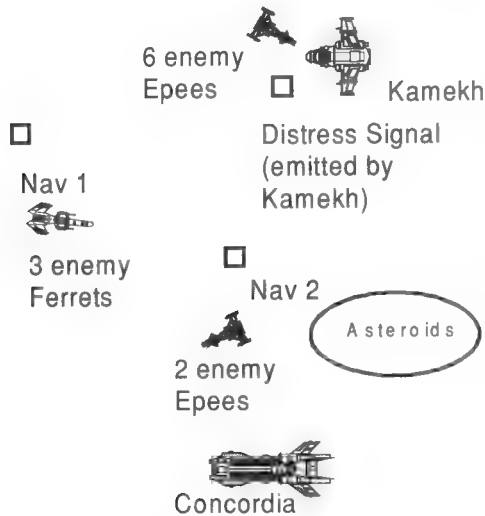
If you fail: If you fail at mission 2, you go to series 5, mission 1. If you fail at mission 3, you lose the game.

If you win: You go to Ghorah Khar (1).

RIGEL MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Ferrets, 6 Epees, 2 Epees.



Tolwyn tells you that you're needed at Rigel a while longer. We've got to look into the *Gettysburg* situation. Tactical knows that the pirates have destroyed some Free Traders that were on their way to the supply base, and Tolwyn suspects that the pirates have destroyed the base. We've got to move quickly, however, or they'll find that we're here, and they'll run away.

Angel then explains the mission. You're to send a message to the *Gettysburg* while at the same time investigating a distress call from a Kilrathi Kamekh. You fly with wingmen Sky and Shelton.



Once you've visited the Kamekh, you'll deliberately fly the asteroids to look for an ambush. One of the toughest parts about this mission is the friendly fire from the wingmen; it seems the more "helpers" you have on these missions, the more trouble occurs. That's a particularly large problem in Epees, as they have no shielding to speak of.

At the distress call, you find a Kilrathi Kamekh. You give it 15 seconds to surrender. The Kamekh replies that it is under attack by pirates, and, as you see in the map, you'll see six enemy Epees, but the Kamekh is destroyed before you can do anything about it. Sometimes some of the Epees disappear. Be very careful and be sure to attack from the rear, as you cannot avoid head-to-head confrontation in an Epee. And be sure that you're shooting at an enemy Epee; Sky and Shelton are a pain, but you don't want to kill them, right?

Afterwards, you have a run-in with Major Edmonds, who's talking with Stingray about the *Gettysburg*. "This is a military vessel, not a rumor mill," you say. (Sounds like you hang around with Angel too much.)

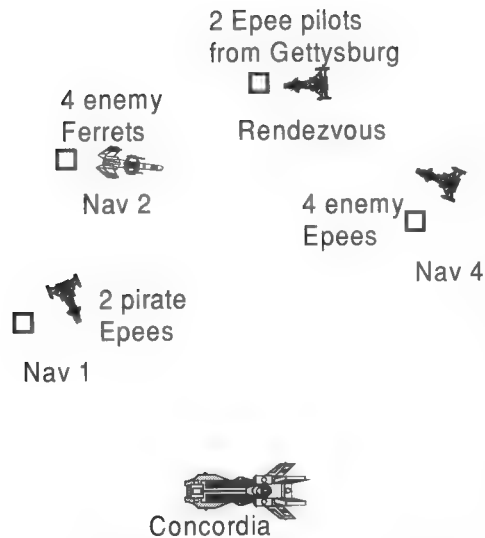
RIGEL MISSION 1

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Epees, 2 Ferrets, 2 Ferrets, 4 Epees

Angel explains that the *Gettysburg's* commander told the crew to open fire on unarmed transports attempting to flee N'Tanya. The crew refused, leading to the mutiny. "If they were issued an illegal order, then they had the right to disobey it—that's what the Admiral is doing! We're trying to bring them back, aren't we?" Angel replies that yes, the commander's already been court-martialed; he's been at Olympus Station for a while. By the way, he and his officers escaped with a Crossbow bomber. That's the first that you've heard about a new ship called the Crossbow. It's an improvement over the Broadsword—and the *Gettysburg* has the prototypes.

Your mission is to try to communicate with the mutineers. Not all of them are willing to talk, so it may be a bit dicey.



As you see in the map, you'll meet a number of enemy ships; just destroy them. You'll eventually meet up with Bear; don't fire on him. As you escort him back to the *Concordia*, you're attacked by some Epees who apparently don't want Bear talking to the *Concordia* staff; destroy them also. Alternatively, as this is not a critical mission, you can just go from the *Concordia* to the rendezvous point and back.

Afterward, you find out (from mutineer Jason "Bear" Bondarevsky) that some of the mutineers are still at the Rigel Supply Depot—the depot hasn't been destroyed. They've got the *Gettysburg* defending them, and they don't know that they'll be offered amnesty if they just surrender. We can't beat the *Gettysburg* and the Depot, so someone's got to draw the *Gettysburg* away. Sounds like a job for...

RIGEL MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Ferrets, 3 Ferrets, 2 Epees, 2 Epees

You fly a Sabre on this mission (thank heavens).

On the way to the *Gettysburg*, you're attacked a few times; feel free to return fire. Your job, however, is to get through nav 2. You can afterburner away from the Ferrets, as you can outrun them, but that won't work with the Epees. Fortunately, a single missile will usually destroy them.

Once you get to nav 3, a new item appears on your nav scan—the *Gettysburg*. You will be met by a *Gettysburg* pilot, who will suggest that you leave. You say that you'll stay until they rendezvous with you. They

come back with the coordinates; you autonav into a whole pile of bad guys and the *Gettysburg*. Lt. Colonel Poelma (whom Bear has mentioned is a good guy) meets you and you talk a bit; finally, they ACLS you to the *Gettysburg*. You are then escorted to the brig. You are interrogated in the brig; you tell them that they've been pardoned. If the mutineers accompany you to the supply depot, then...but you are interrupted; there's no way to get a message to the people in the supply depot. There's a convoy (two transport ships) en route to the supply depot who don't know what's going on, and so the mutineers at the depot will kill the convoy. "There's no time, then! Are you with the pirates or the Confederation?" you ask. They want to help, but their senior officers are all gone; who will lead them into battle? You offer to lead them into battle; they offer a Crossbow YA-18A to fly while doing it.

By the way, if you didn't make it to the *Gettysburg*, then you fly Series 5—the "second chance" series—mission 1, instead of Rigel 3.



RIGEL MISSION 3

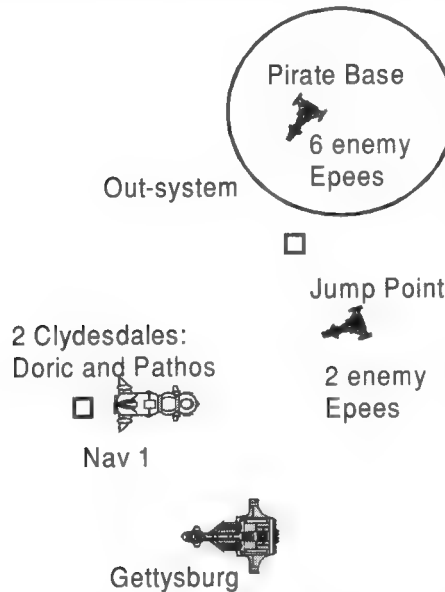
Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Epees, 6 Epees, pirate base

You trade your Sabre for a Crossbow in this mission—a lousy trade, if you ask me. The Crossbow's supposed to be such a hot ship, but the visibility's lousy, and, while it doesn't seem to have shields as good as the Broadsword's, it shares the Broadsword's lack of afterburners.

You fly with wingmen Poelma and Quilan on a strike against the pirate base.

First, you rendezvous with the convoy Clydesdales *Doric* and *Pathos*,



and explain that they should follow you instead of remaining on their present course. You face Epees, but you have no missiles (the Pilums are of no use against Confederation craft), so just target the enemy and don't waste shots. You can down an Epee with just a few bursts of your neutrons and mass drivers together, although I find that I can stay more flexible by just using the mass drivers. You do not need torpedoes to destroy the pirate base; conven-

tional weapons will do the job, if your tracking computer is damaged and you can't use torpedoes.

If you fail to destroy the pirate base, you see the retreat sequence (you lose).

GHORAH KHAR 1 SERIES

Finally, you settle into your new role as a Special Operations team member. You go to Ghorah Khar to defend Olympus Station from Kilrathi attacks. The cats want this system back badly. For the first time in 10 years, you're teamed up with Paladin again. Hobbes, who figured prominently in the Ghorah Khar uprising of 10 years ago, flies your wing. You say goodbye to Angel (another cinematic kiss), and take off for Ghorah Khar.

Wingman: Hobbes

Ship: Crossbow

Victory Conditions: Get the data pod in mission 3

If you lose: You go to series 5, mission 2.

If you win: You go to the Ghorah Khar 2 series.

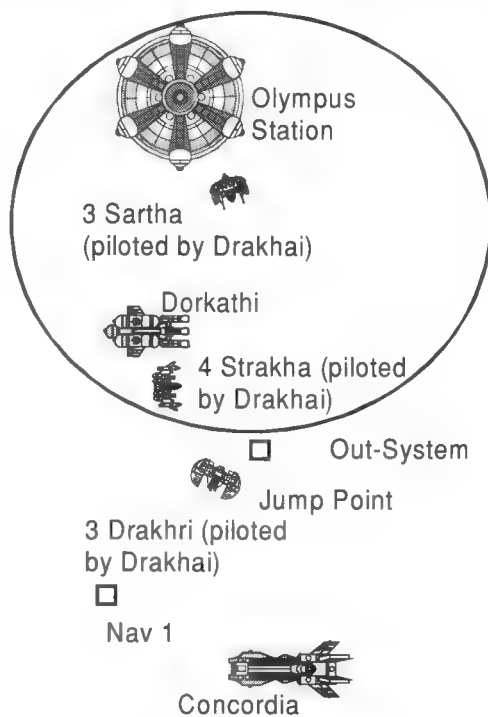
GHORAH KHAR 1 MISSION 0

Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Drakhri (Drakhai), Dorkathi and 4 Strakha (Drakhai), 3 Sartha (Drakhai)

You escort Paladin with Crossbow to Olympus, and, as you see in the map, meet Drakhai by the bushelful. Remember that when you come up against these Strakha, they are Drakhai Strakha, and so will not explode immediately; you'll have to work on these ships. You lack afterburners, so don't fly in a straight line (they'll lock onto you), and use the forward and rear turrets.

On your final approach to Olympus, you may not see the third Sartha; it's a good distance off. You may be tempted to go to Olympus, then autonav back to the jump point in order to give yourself a crack at the third Sartha, but don't. There's an interesting bug that you trip if you do that—Olympus Station follows





you back to the jump point, like Hobbes and the *Bonnie Heather*! Then the game crashes.

As I've said before, don't ever worry about the *Bonnie Heather*. Paladin may scream like a pig for help, but I've never seen it blown up. I think it's indestructible.

Afterwards, Paladin explains that the people of Ghorah Khar rebelled 10 years ago. Eight years ago, Olympus Station was built to protect Ghorah Khar. The Empire has attempted to retake Ghorah Khar before, but now it's more urgent than ever before, due to the three other worlds that are rebelling. Hence, Paladin believes that the Kilrathi mission may now be to retake Ghorah Khar...or destroy it.

GHORAH KHAR 1 MISSION 1

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Jalkehi, 2 Grikath (Drakhai), 2 Kamekh, 5 Drakhri

In this mission, you escort the Clydesdale *Tinderbox* to a rendezvous with the Ralatha Shar N'Tanya to get guns to the rebels on Ghorah Khar.

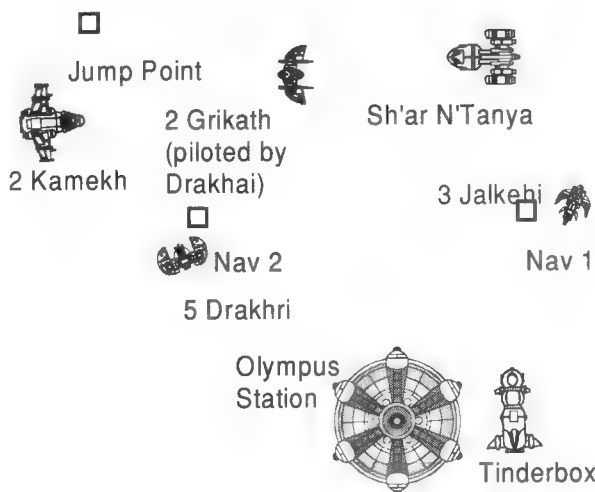
First, you meet 3 Jalkehi. Get up to speed and target and lock the front Jalkehi, and launch a Pilum when the Jalkehi is about 9000 meters away. That'll slow it down, and by the time it hits, you'll be in firing range. Fire at it a few times, and it'll die. Then focus on the second one for a while; it will break off. The third Jalkehi will probably be lining up to fire on the Clydesdale by then; turn and attack it, taking care to keep an eye on the rear turret to see when the second Jalkehi will return. The neutron guns in your rear turret can destroy the second one quickly.

You'll then make your way to the rendezvous with the Ralatha. Two Drakhai Grikaths will attack; use the same drill on them. Target the forward ship, then launch a missile and follow up with guns. Once it's dead, the second Grikath will probably run once you start firing on it. After that, you'll see two Kamekh. Best strategy to kill them quickly is to fly circles around them and then use rear/forward guns alternately, so that the rear shields take a pounding, then get a rest, then the front shields

do the work for a while. The alternative—torpedoes—takes too much time, and I’m not sure you’re going to get that time anyway before the Ralatha and the Clydesdale stupidly fly right into the flak gun radius of the Kamekhs. On the way back, make sure that you’ve recharged your shields to the max before autonavving to nav 2, as you’ll then meet five Drakhri; by the way, you can skip this nav point, and go back through nav 1 if you like, as this is a nonessential mission.

Afterwards, Major Edmonds rides you for taking so long on the trip. You tell her “we’ll discuss it after I land, Major.” You confront her later about it. She explains that you remind her of her own failure in the past. On the TCS *Kirsk*, she served as communications

officer. On a mission in Hell’s Kitchen, the *Kirsk* tried to slip past enemy lines to destroy a starbase. An encoded transmission came in, and Edmonds decoded it...incorrectly. Result: Two thousand people died. “I spent six months in a burn ward, they rebuilt my face, and I was reassigned to the *Concordia*. Looking at you...the Coward of K’Tithrak Mang...reminded me of my mistakes.” You express your sympathy. She brushes it off, saying, “I don’t need your pity, sir. Just leave me alone and let me do my job.”



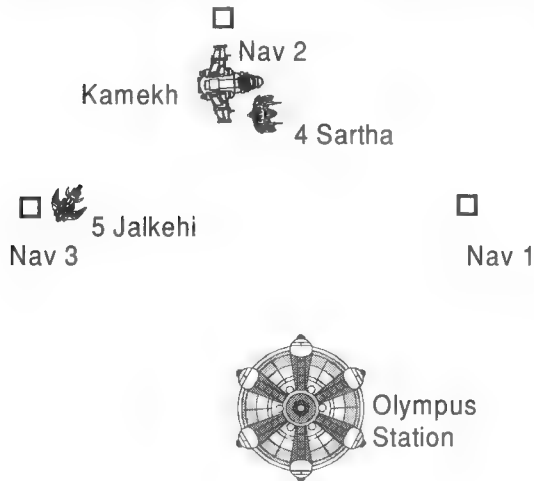
GHORAH KHAR 1 MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Sarthas and Kamekh, 5 Jalkehis



You and Hobbes have to wet-nurse three rookies (Cafrelli, Starr, and Rhino). It's a pretty out-of-place mission, as you two are supposed to be



Special Operations guys; why you're playing flight instructor is beyond me. The biggest thing to worry about in this mission is friendly fire; these new pilots are real idiots. (They'll probably come back as my wingmen in Wing Commander III, with my luck.)

There's nothing special going on in this mission, except that you fly a Sabre.

GHORAH KHAR 1 MISSION 3

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Drakhri, asteroids, 2 Grikath, mines, 4 Drakhri

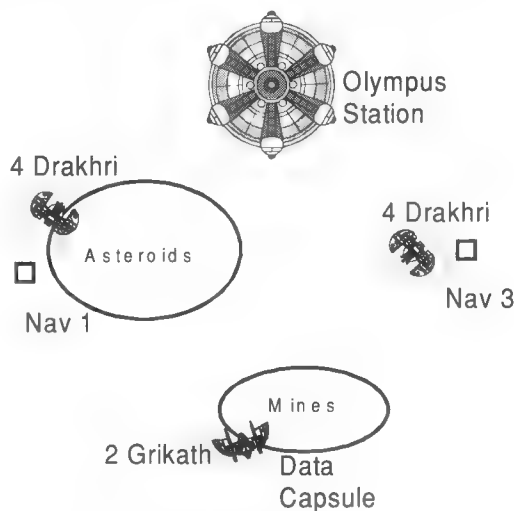
We've found out that the Kilrathi have dropped a data pod with plans for the invasion to retake Ghorah Khar at the edge of the Ghorah Khar system. The mission is to get the pod; then Edmonds will crack the code and then plant a fake pod with a substitute invasion plan. You fly a Sabre with Hobbes.

While waiting for the Sabres to be refueled, Hobbes reveals that he is from the royal family, the Thrak'hra. He wonders what has become of his family after all this time.

Easy winning: You can actually succeed in this mission by going directly to nav 2, killing two Grikath, getting the pod, and returning to Olympus. As always when flying with Hobbes, look out for friendly fire. When there's only one enemy ship left, just break off and let Hobbes have it; he'll fire at it even if he's got to go through you to get to it.

You not only have to kill the Grikath in the minefield, you've got to get the pod in the minefield. I strongly suggest that you use the four-key sequence that I described earlier. Set your speed to 400, and fly toward the pod. When it's filled your forward viewscreen, press in rapid sequence back-space, then F4, then G, to activate the tractor beam; then you'll see the pod pop up, so just press the spacebar to activate the tractor beam, and then you can go home.

To win the series, you've got to get this right. You can eject in missions 0 to 2, and then get the pod and kill the Grikaths, and still finish the series. If, on the other hand, you screw up, they send two other pilots after the pod (Paladin tells you), and one didn't make it back. Also, a Rigakh cruiser made past the defensive forces on the Ghorah Khar-Rarkath border. Civilian damage to Ghorah Khar ensued, and you've got to play series 5, mission 2. Whether you win or lose, Paladin says that he's uncomfortable with what's going on, but he doesn't know why.



GHORAH KHAR 2 SERIES

The bait has been dropped, the trap is set. Major Edmonds has decoded transmissions of a strike fleet coming in right on the vector indicated by the fake pod. Doesn't look like a big fleet, but we're going for it anyway.

This is the difficult series in Special Operations 1. Unfortunately, you must fly this series with Hobbes; the missions are mainly in Crossbows.

Wingman: Hobbes

Ship: Crossbow, Sabre



Victory Conditions: Destroy the Fralthra in mission 3.

If you lose: You go to series 5, mission 3.

If you win: You win the game.

GHORAH KHAR 2 MISSION 0

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Drakhri, 4 Drakhri and 2 Fralthra, 1 Drakhri

You must go out to attack the incoming strike force that is following the false plan that you planted in the previous series. Hit the Fralthra quickly, as it'll jump out fast. You fly with Hobbes and Landis. They'll typically kill the Fralthra for you, so the mission is not as bad as it looks.

After a successful attack, though, you've got to turn around quickly—five carrier groups are incoming, quick! The patrol craft that should have

sounded the warning were all destroyed; it was Edmond's deciphering work that tipped the Kilrathi's hand.

Meanwhile, Paladin is on his way out to the Sharm system, to follow enemy movement. It's a risky move, he agrees, moving the *Bonnie Heather* out in harm's way, but he feels that it's inconspicuous and, besides, who will notice a simple free

trader? You're not happy about it, and neither is Hobbes, but there's nothing to be done for it.



GHORAH KHAR 2 MISSION 1

Mission type: Defend/Escort

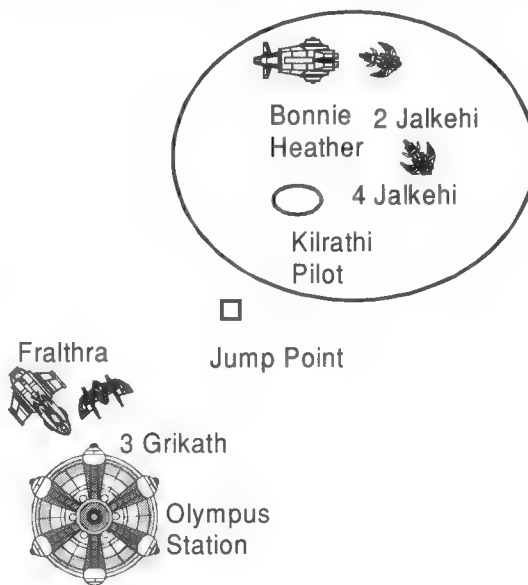
Enemies/obstacles: 3 Grikath and Fralthra, 4 Jalkehi, 2 Jalkehi

As you fly out to attack the second part of the attack force, Paladin radios new instructions to you: Defend Olympus, then rush over and back him up. He's been attacked and his jump capacitor is disabled, but they've stopped attacking. Another wing of Kilrathi fighters appeared a few minutes back, but it has attacked the first group of Kilrathi fighters—there's some kind of internal squabble!

At Olympus, you'll have to handle three Grikath and Fralthra, but you probably won't have to worry about the capital ship, as Hobbes is pretty quick to kill it. If, on the other hand, Hobbes ejects, then, as usual, charge your shields to the maximum before attacking the Fralthra. Olympus isn't going to be destroyed, don't worry. And you can speed up the shield recharge by speeding up the frame rate (Alt-minus) while you're waiting; don't forget to slow it down again once you get back to combat. And if you ask the *Bonnie Heather* to dock and it doesn't respond, don't worry; there's some kind of bug that the game displays whenever Paladin talks to you on the comm.

After the jump point, you'll see an ejected Kilrathi pilot with failing life support readings. You grab the pilot (this happens cinematically, so you needn't do anything), and head back home.

If you eject from this mission, the Kilrathi pick you up and you die.





The only things that you can blow off are the Grikath and Fralthra at Olympus, and you'll probably not be able to avoid killing them.

Afterward, the *Bonnie Heather's* jump drive was damaged, so it can't jump back to Olympus; hence, it'll have to be on standard reaction drive. Paladin needs you to fly cover; you agree.

In the *Bonnie Heather*, Hobbes informs you that the Kilrathi pilot that you saved was none other than Prince Thrakhath, heir to the throne of Kilrah. The prince is in the brig. For a guy who's just been rescued from certain death, Thrakhath isn't too friendly. Ralgha nar Khallas, his relative, is in the brig as part of the questioning team. Thrakhath complains that he cannot be held prisoner—it is dishonorable. Thrakhath explains that the reason that he was drifting in space was because Khasra tried to kill him so that he would be the heir to the throne of Kilrah.

Shortly thereafter, Khasra calls the *Bonnie Heather*. He knows that Thrakhath is on the ship. If the *Bonnie Heather* gives up Thrakhath, then Khasra may not destroy it. Otherwise, Khasra (and a pile of Gothri) will destroy the ship and all passengers. Thrakhath says that he must have a ship and be allowed to die with honor. You tell him that you won't let him die, so he says that he'll fight by your side. Nothing doing, you reply; he's staying in the brig.

However, once you're under way, you're hailed by Thrakhath. The *Bonnie Heather* had another power failure, and so the brig force fields failed. He was forced to knock Ralgha unconscious, but he didn't kill him because "Ralgha is one of my few relatives who has not tried to kill me." He's already out of missile range with Ralgha's stolen Crossbow, and he's after Khasra's boys.

GHORAH KHAR 2 MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 6 Gothri (including ace Khasra)

Now that he's escaped, you've got to chase Thrakhath to jump point.

There's only the point labeled "Thrakhath" on the map. Once you get there, you find six Gothri, including Khasra (a Gothri ace).

Thrakhath jumps out, and you can't follow—there's no jump point.

Even if you kill Thrakath, he "escapes," according to the story line.

This is a very hard scenario. As far as I can see, the six Gothri that you see in the map are more than a match for your Crossbow. As you cannot stop Thrakhath in any case, the goal seems to be to stay alive. To that end, just turn and run back

to the *Bonnie Heather* as soon

as you get out of autopilot.

Taunt one Gothri and then run. He'll track you. He's got

particle beams, which have a 5,000 km range, a greater

one than your rear neutron

guns. Zigzag to avoid direct

hits and hammer him with

the rear guns as soon as he's

close. Another will follow:

Just keep running at top

speed toward the *Bonnie*

Heather At about 8,000 km,

they disappear, so I suppose you could loiter near the *Bonnie Heather*, re-

charge shields, and then zip out and take out a Gothri, then back to the

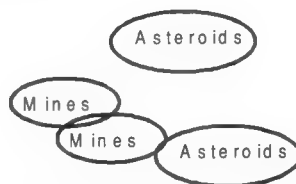
Bonnie Heather.



6 Gothri



Thrakath



Afterwards, you and the *Bonnie Heather* jump back to Olympus. You find that three of the five carrier groups attacked yesterday, with 14 dead pilots as a result. The next wave is due in 15 minutes. You land and grab a pair of Sabres, then you and Hobbes take off.

If you eject, you die. You can blow this whole mission; it's not the critical mission in this series.

GHORAH KHAR 2 MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Sarthas, 3 Gothris, 2 Fralthra



You say a few words of encouragement to Major Edmonds over her successful decoding work which gave the advance warning of the incoming fleets. She's reluctant to take the praise, but you see that it hits home.

You then take off to meet the fleet.

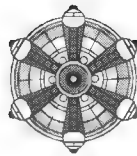
20,000 km en route to task force, you meet Bear and two Sarthas. Then you take on the task force that you see in the map. No special advice here, just the usual capital ship attack. If you win, the game's over. The

resistance on the three Kilrathi worlds wins.



Task Force

But meanwhile, at Kilrathi Battle Command, in the Khallas System, M'shrak Sector, there is also some rejoicing. Thrakhath reports to the Emperor that they have successfully deceived the Terrans, which diverted the ships of the Enigma Sector to prevent the destruction of Ghorah Khar. As a result, the forces of Kilrah easily moved into the Deneb Sector. They captured Deneb Sector Command in less than 6 hours.



Olympus Station

The Emperor says that this is better than the failure at K'Tithrak Mang. Thrakhath says that he will not fail the Emperor again. The Emperor replies that it would be very...unfortunate...if he did. Thrakhath also reports that you killed Khasra. The Emperor is sad about that, but he notes that at least Khasra died honorably, which is more than the Emperor expected. Thrakhath ends by saying that he knows that the humans will return to recapture Deneb. When they do, he'll be waiting for them.

SERIES 5: SECOND CHANCES

You never play this series as a series. Instead, it's a collection of the single missions that the game offers you as a way to get back onto the winning path if you've lost a series. There are four missions because there are four series—one "second chance" for each series.

Each of these missions are "strike" type missions. They usually have fairly stringent requirements, leading me to give you the advice that it's better to go back and replay a failed mission than it is to have to play one of these missions.

SERIES 5 MISSION 0

You play this mission if you messed up the Pembroke series. The *Concordia* is under attack, and you must defend it. You fly with Doomsday in a Sabre.

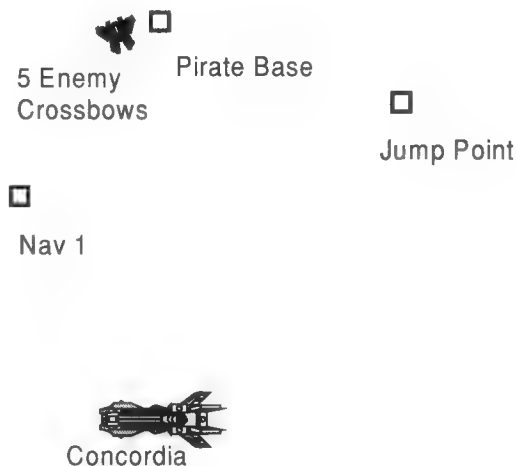
As you can see in the map, there are five Gothris and 2 Kamekh attacking the *Concordia*. Destroy them all, or the game's over. (When it's over, you get to watch Ghorah Khar self-destruct, and the *Concordia* is recalled to Earth.)



SERIES 5 MISSION 1

You play this mission if you messed up the third mission of the Rigel series. It's the strike at the pirate base if you didn't make it to the *Gettysburg*. You fly a similar mission to Rigel 3, but you must do it in a Broadsword.

You fly this mission from the *Concordia*; the Admiral



sends you on the mission. The *Gettysburg* was destroyed “three hours ago” if you didn’t make it there to send the message to the crew and save them. A reactor accident, you’re told. Crossbow bombers arrived with the survivors. You instead fly the mission in a Broadsword with Ralgha.

As you see in the map, there is no nav 2 or nav 3, and the Ferrets do not appear.

At the pirate base, five enemy Crossbows take you on.

If you eject, a Kilrathi ship picks you up, and you die.

If you fail, then the retreat sequence plays, and the game is over.

SERIES 5 MISSION 2

You play this mission if you fail the first Ghorah Khar series.

A distress call has arrived from two pilots en route to Ghorah Khar

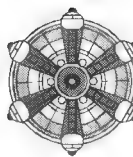
□  4 Grikath
Nav 2

2 Sabres
(Ladyman
and Marnier)

□ 

Nav 1

4 Gothri



Olympus
Station

from Olympus Station. One of the pilots is the space forces commander Colonel Marnier. You must defend them. At nav 1, you meet 4 Gothris and the people that you’re escorting, pilots Ladyman and Marnier. Then, on the way back to Olympus, you meet 4 Grikath. You must bring both ships back in one piece. You fly in a Sabre with Hobbes.

You actually needn’t go to nav 2 and meet the Grikaths; you can also go Olympus to nav 1, save the Sabres, and return to Olympus directly.



SERIES 5 MISSION 3

This is a kind of “second shot” at a Fralthra strike. Again, you fly with Hobbes in a Sabre.

This is a strike mission against a Fralthra, much like Ghorah Khar 2 mission 3. The Fralthra is protected by two waves of Gothri: first five, then four Gothri, and finally the Fralthra.

Well, now you’re the future’s version of a Green Beret or Navy Seal. What other interesting missions will Special Operations undertake? Find out in Special Operations 2, in the next chapter.

Task Force

Fralthra



4 Gothri

5 Gothri



Concordia

**THE MISSIONS
OF SPECIAL
OPERATIONS 2**



T W E L V E



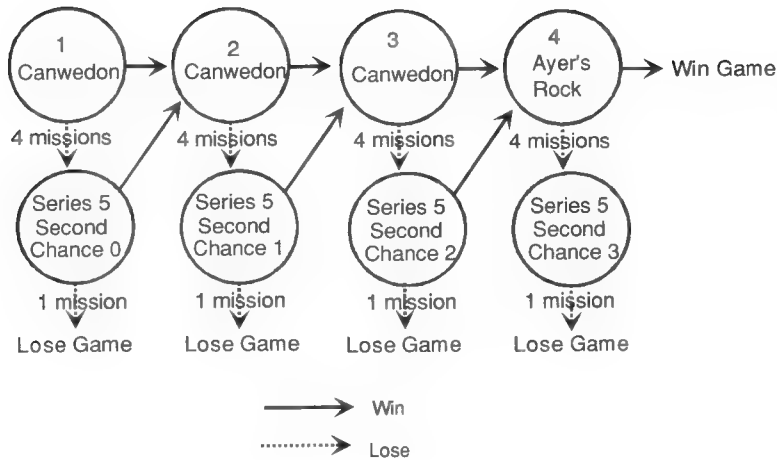
Just as Wing Commander I had two add-on games, so also Wing Commander II has two add-ons, Special Operations 1 and 2. Ellen Guon, one of the game designers at Origin that work on the Wing Commander games, said on CompuServe a year or two back that there were plans to do three Special Operations games, but it looks like that won't happen; clearly, Origin felt that devoting resources to Wing Commander Academy and Privateer was a better business move.

In Special Operations 2, you take on the enemy within the Confederation. In Wing Commander II, we were introduced to the Society of Mandarins, a group of Terrans who believe that the way to end the war is by allowing Terra to be conquered by the Kiltrathi, and then to work their way into the fabric of Kiltrathi society, changing it from within, and making a combined society of Kiltrathi and Terran peoples, working together and treating each other equally. (Clearly, the recreational drugs of the 28th century are better than the ones we have now.)

Major Zachary Colson, Jazz, is rescued by the Mandarins as he is being transported off to prison. He escapes, and turns his amazing flying abilities to the service of the Mandarins, hijacking freighters and harassing the shipping lanes. But he's also the mastermind behind a Kiltrathi plot to capture the prototype of the latest Confederation fighter, the Morningstar.

GAME OVERVIEW

The structure of Special Operations 2 is, as you'd expect, nearly identical to the structure of Special Operations 1 (see the illustration on the next page).



There are four series on the winning track, and four separate “second chance” missions that collectively are a fifth series. Each series has a critical goal in a particular mission, a goal that must be fulfilled, or you’ve lost the series. Often that goal is in the third or fourth mission, but not always.

CANEWDON 1 SERIES

The game opens at a trial. At a ConFed high tribunal chaired by Admiral Tolwyn, on the TCS Centurion (a Waterloo-class ship), Jazz is convicted and sentenced to die for his crimes of treason. He is unrepentant. Meanwhile, a traitor aboard the *Concordia* reports to a Kilrathi about something called the “Morningstar” project. “Bring me this prototype, even if you must spill blood,” the Kilrathi says. “Preferably,” replies the traitor.

This series is mainly meant to set the stage for the important story points of this game: Jazz on the loose, the Morningstar, and the Mandarins.

Wingman: Stingray/no one

Ship: Rapier-G/Sabre

Victory conditions: Rescue Minx (Captain Grimaldi) in the third mission.

If you lose: You go to “second chance” mission 0.

If you win: You go to the Canewdon 2 series.

CANEWDON 1 MISSION 0

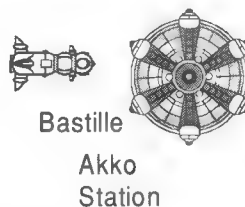
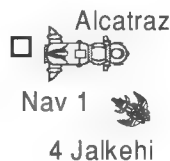
Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Jalkehis

At Akko station, outside the Deneb sector, you get into a Sabre and take off. You must escort the prison ship *Bastille* to a rendezvous with the prison ship *Alcatraz*. Akko apologizes to you for having to cancel your leave for this, but... "Escort Jazz Colson to his execution?" you interrupt. "It'd be my pleasure!" You set off to the rendezvous, but en route, freighters *Xebec* and *Delphinium* are attacked, forcing you to defend them, as well as the *Polemic* and the *Cameleopard*. *Bastille*, meanwhile, is beset by Mandarin hijackers. There is nothing that you can do; Jazz gets away.

Afterward, at Kabla Meth, Kilrathi HQ for the Deneb sector:

The emperor Rakh'rhi is unhappy with Prince Thrakhath. "You attacked civilian targets! Was this out of cowardice?" "Only after decimating the 6th battle fleet," Thrakhath replies. "They will never forget the death and destruction we caused after our victory." (This doesn't actually sound like an answer to me, but what the hey?) Also, the emperor suggests that Jazz could help get the Morningstar. "I would remind you, " the emperor says. "Fear is our most important weapon. ... Use it well."





CANEWDON 1 MISSION 1

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Gothri, 4 Sartha and Dorkathi, 4 Gothri, asteroids

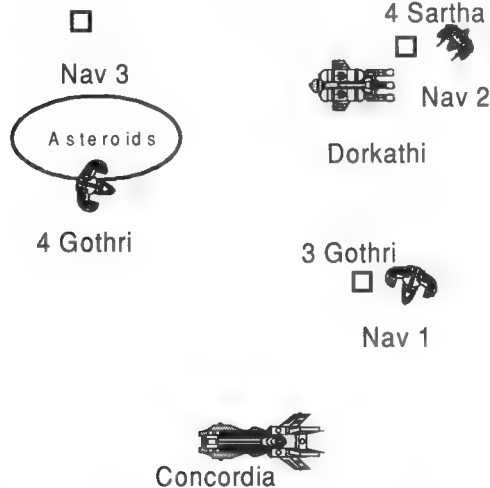
The *Concordia* jumps into the Canewdon system of the Deneb Sector. You do a recon patrol.

It's pretty much your basic patrol—asteroids and bad guys. What makes it worse is the preponderance of Gothris, which are quite a match

for the poor Rapier. If things get too tough, you can always come home, as this is not a critical mission. It's fun to get the Dorkathi that you see in the map if you can do it while the Sartha are still alive, by "strafing" it a number of times.

Afterward, you hear your first gossip about the Morningstar from Sparks. She doesn't know much, just that it's the new ConFed

fighter, and it'll be tested on the *Concordia*. You also meet Maniac, who, you discover, runs the Wild Eagles, the test-pilot team shaking down the Morningstar.



CANEWDON 1 MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Grikath, asteroids, 5 Drakhri

You are called to the bridge with Maniac. Lt. Burkheimer reports Captain Grimaldi's ship couldn't make the jump—in a Morningstar. The Morningstar's jump drive seems plagued by gremlins. In any case, you

fly a Sabre to rescue her, as the Sabre has a tractor beam. Maniac offers to fly the mission, but Tolwyn turns him down. "In the future, Major, I advise you to keep better track of your squadron." It's not a tough mission in a Sabre, unless the tractor beam is still messing you up.

Afterwards, you meet Minx, Maria Grimaldi. She blew up her ship to keep the Kilrathi from getting it. She appears to be attracted to your character.

A bit later, you talk to Maniac, who is bragging. He says that the Wild Eagles are to train people to fly "like I do." He tells you that the Morningstar has "special capabilities" that Maniac can't talk about, even to you.

This is the critical mission in this series; retrieve Minx, or go to Second Chances mission 0.

Morningstar



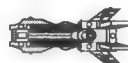
Nav 1



5 Drakhri



4 Grikath



Concordia

CANEWDON 1 MISSION 3

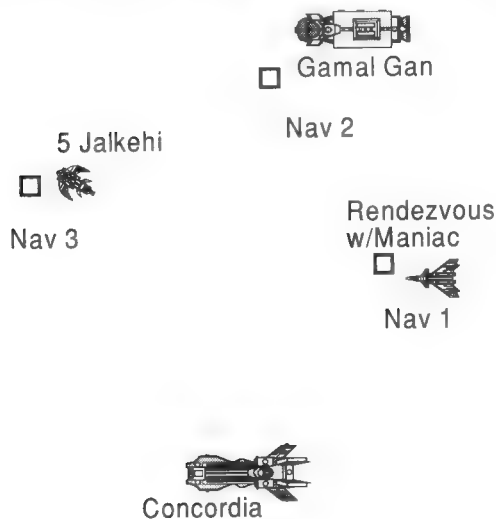
Mission type: Escort

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Jalkehis

No wingman on this trip, another Sabre mission. Tactical thinks that some actual data would help them figure out what's wrong with the Morningstar's jump drive. So you meet him out at the jump point, sit there and wait for him to jump, and then do a patrol. Near nav 2, you'll be hailed by the *Gamal Gan*, a Kilrathi freighter from Hhallas. It surrenders; you just ignore it and continue. Do not fire on it, and finish your patrol. The five Jalkehis that you see in the map can be ignored, or you can keep your fighting skills fresh by destroying them.



After, Tolwyn tells you that the *Gamal Gan* had a Mandarin aboard. It



means that the Mandarins have become more aggressive—a bad sign. The *Gamal Gan* was up to no good, as it jettisoned its cargo into the sun, and its log books were “blatant forgeries,” as Tolwyn says.

Then you meet with Paladin. He tells you that the Kilrathi know about the Morningstar project. The human Mandarin told him that the *Gamal Gan* was delivering supplies to a place

called Ayer’s Rock. Paladin says that he’ll find it.

CANEWDON 2 SERIES

Wingman: Maniac, Stingray

Ship: Broadsword, Sabre

Victory conditions: Destroy the Kamekh in mission 3.

If you lose: You go to the “second chances” series, mission 1.

If you win: You go to the Canewdon 3 series.

CANEWDON 2 MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Strakha, 1 Gothri, 4 Jalkehis

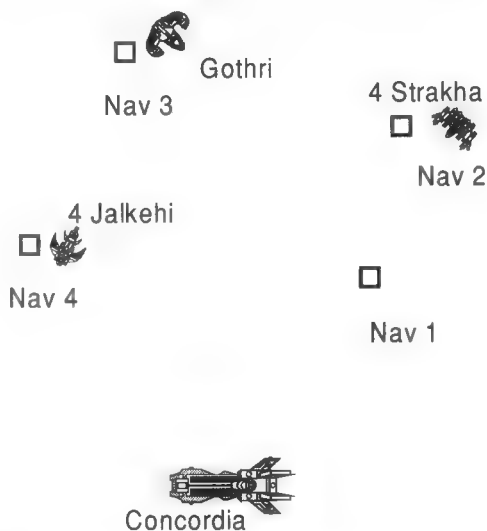
You assist in the Morningstar shakedown by escorting the Morningstar test during a patrol; it’s you and three Morningstars. You don’t see any mines, despite Angel’s warning that you’d see them.

Since you've got Strakha, which are very fast, against a Broadsword, which is quite slow to turn and maneuver, it's important to hit a Strakha and destroy it the first time.

Use the ITTS, as it can continue to track a Strakha for a bit after the ship has stealthed.

Afterwards, you play cards with the Wild Eagles. You meet Talon Burkeimer, who speaks Kilrathi. Markham "Crossbones" Colt is also there; we find that he has a bizarre fatalistic point of view, not all that different, I suppose, from Doomsday. Minx is also there, and

makes a minor pass at you. "You know the Colonel?" someone asks. "Not as well as I'd like to," is her answer.

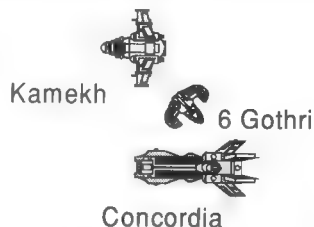


CANEWDON 2 MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 6 Gothris and a Kamekh

This is a very tough, but straightforward, mission: Defend the *Concordia*. About the only way that I can get anywhere with this mission is to just blast out of the neighborhood on afterburners, and then engage my full guns, set speed to the maximum and activate the targeting computer returning to the *Concordia*. It isn't an essential mission, however, so you can take your time.





Don't take too much time, however, because if the *Concordia* dies, then the game's over. You fly a Sabre with Stingray.

Afterwards, Talon and Crossbones ride you about your age, and wonder when you're going to retire. Talon suggests that if Maniac had gone after Jazz, he'd have toasted him and kept him from being a problem in the future, like he is now. (Where are all the friendly comrades that you worked with in the first Wing Commander missions? Seems like not too many people like you.)

CANEWDON 2 MISSION 2

Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: Rocks, 3 Drakhri, 3 Jalkehis, 4 Sarthas, nuclear bomb

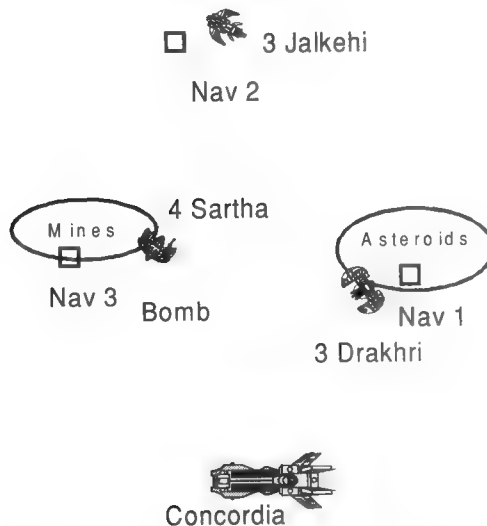
In this mission, you are sent out to retrieve a data pod. There's plenty of Kilrathi to keep you busy on the way, and once you get to the pod, Major Edmonds calls you to tell you that the pod is a trap—it's actually a thermonuclear bomb. As you see in the map, it is guarded by four

Sarthas, and if you kill the last Sartha—or it manages to kill itself, as it can do easily—then the bomb goes off, and you die.

Your wingman is a woman (judging from the voice) named Wasp. She doesn't fly too well, so send her home as quickly as you can.

Later, you find out that Jazz has been leading hijacking attempts on Terran ships. Talon damns you for letting him go. Then Minx

meets you and you talk about Jazz. You're tired of being blamed for everything that he does. She's sympathetic and kisses you. (The hussy!)

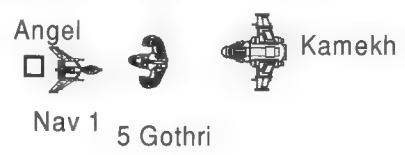


CANEWDON 2 MISSION 3

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Gothri, Kamekh

You meet with Minx on the flight deck. She's returned from patrol early because her wing was under attack, and so she left her wingman at nav 1. The wingman, as it turns out, is Angel, so you rush out to save her. Later, Angel explains that she ordered Minx back home, so as to keep the Morningstar out of Kiltrathi hands.



It's a simple course—just a nav 1 with lots of bad guys: five Gothri and a Kamekh. The Kamekh does not appear immediately; you've got to hang around the area for a while before it jumps in. You must destroy the Kamekh to win this series.

Afterward, you get another kiss, this time from Angel. (Feeling guilty yet?) Later, you talk with Paladin, com-



miserating about Jazz. You're tired of taking all the blame for things that he does. Paladin says that you'll probably meet Jazz before you know it. "Do you know something that I don't?" you ask. "Nothing you won't know before long," he replies.

CANEWDON 3 SERIES

Wingman: Maniac

Ship: Morningstar

Victory conditions: Touch all nav points and destroy capital ships in third mission.



If you lose: You go to the second chance series, mission 2.

If you win: You go to the Ayer's Rock series.

CANEWDON 3 MISSION 0

Mission type: Rendezvous

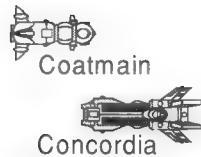
Enemies/obstacles: 5 Drakhri, Ralatha

The Mandarins are offering a prisoner swap: the crews of the hijacked Terran freighters for three imprisoned Mandarins. The Confederation can only have one fighter at the exchange, or no deal. Rumor has it that Jazz will be there. It is, as you'd guess, a trap. (Jazz does not actually show.)

You start by escorting the *Coatmain* to a meeting point, where it jumps out and you take charge of the *Iguana*. (Both are Clydesdales.) Wait until



Rendezvous point



the *Iguana* acknowledges you, then autonav to nav 2. At nav 2 are five Drakhri and a Ralatha.

Move fast against the Drakhri, so that you can take on the Ralatha. I recommend firing a Pilum when the first Drakhri is about 6000 meters away; that way, it's a straight path to the target (the Pilums' targeting algorithms are kind of stupid), and the Drakhri's chaff pods don't help much, as they fall behind the Drakhri, and as the missile homes in on the

chaff pod, it still hits the enemy ship. By then, you'll be close enough to target another Drakhri, and destroy it with your mass drivers. Close in on another Drakhri and use another Pilum, which will either destroy it or soften it up. Get the fourth, and the fifth will probably run away. Move

quickly to target the Ralatha, as its antimatter guns can destroy the *Iguana* in no time. Once you've destroyed the Ralatha, there's no other bad guys on this mission, so off to home.

This is not a critical mission, so you can actually screw this one up and remain on the winning path.

CANEWDON 3 MISSION 1

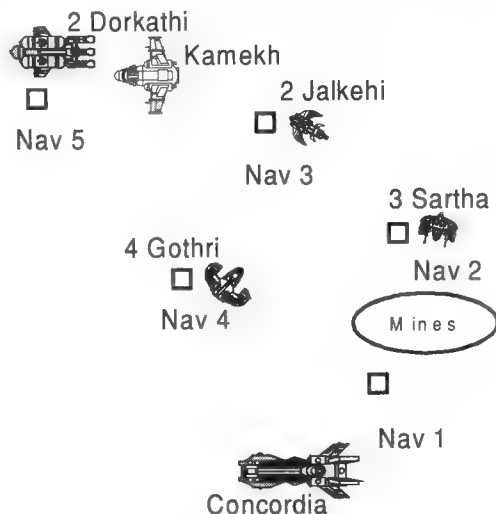
Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: Mines, 3 Sarthas, 2 Jalkehi, 4 Gothri, 1 Kamekh, 2 Dorkathi

Maniac tells Talon and Crossbones to patrol in the Morningstar. On the flight deck, they find that Minx is already leaving. Realizing that she's a traitor, they try to stop her...but it's too late. A bomb disables the flight deck. No ships can launch to pursue her! Crossbones is killed, and Sparks McCullough and Talon are in Sickbay. It'll take 15 minutes to get the flight deck ready—and then you'll chase Minx. She must be rendezvousing with an enemy ship.

You finally get to fly a Morningstar. That's when Maniac tells you that the Morningstar is equipped with a new missile called the Mace, a tactical nuclear weapon.

You can either activate the Mace by firing it and running away (it detonates in 10 seconds), or by firing it and then hitting it with your guns...but be sure you're a good ways away before doing that.



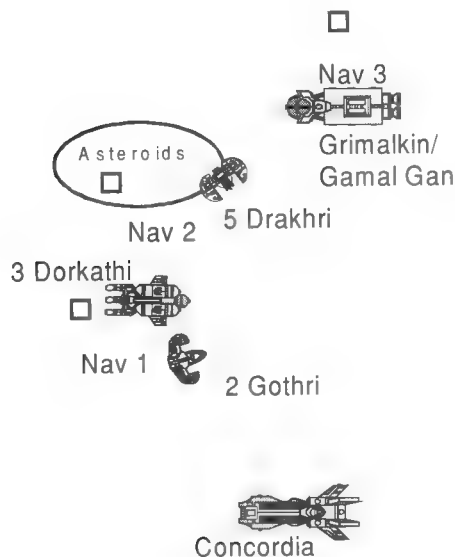


Some Kilrathi attack you to slow you down in your chase of Minx; they are successful. When you get to the jump point, Minx is gone.

This is supposed to be a fight that gives you some experience with the Morningstar, against fairly weak opposition. While the Mace works well against the Kamekh, it's hard to get close enough to be sure that it'll hit the ship.

Instead, I recommend using your Mace by launching it directly into the pack of Gothri as soon as you drop out of autonav. Their gunfire will detonate and you'll probably destroy two Gothri outright and leave the other two damaged.

Afterward, you talk with Paladin. Scorpion, an agent of Paladin's, infiltrated the Mandarins a year ago. Paladin hadn't heard from him, but now he's finally reported in...from Ayer's Rock! Now they know the location of the Mandarin base. You're going there, with Talon and Maniac in tow. Maniac is inconsolable, but perhaps this mission will allow him to redeem himself...in his own eyes, if in no one else's.



CANEWDON 3 MISSION 2

Mission type: Rendezvous

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Gothri, 3 Dorkathi, rocks, 5 Drakhri,

Time to head off to Ayer's Rock. You're to rendezvous with Paladin and fly with the *Gamal Gan*. There's a heavy enemy presence, but the *Gamal Gan* is, like the *Bonnie Heather*, invulnerable.

This mission is the critical one. Touch all the nav points and destroy the capital ships, and you'll win the series.

Once you're docked on the *Gamal Gan*, you learn that the ship has electromagnetic shielding that will keep Kilrathi sensors from detecting the Morningstars. The plan is to use the Kilrathi freighter to sneak behind enemy lines, so as to scout out Ayer's Rock. Talon is along; he was injured when Minx stole the Morningstar, injured to the point that he'll never fly again, but his knowledge of Kilrathi language, culture, and tactics will be invaluable.

From this point on, if you eject, then the Kilrathi get you, and you die.

CANEWDON 3 MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Strakha, mines, 4 Jalkehi, 2 Gothri

Escort the *Gamal Gan* to the jump point prior to the jump to Ayer's Rock. Then you and the Grimalkin make the jump with the Grimalkin, as the Morningstar drives can't be trusted.

There's fighter activity, but nothing too terrible. At nav 1, stay to the left of the navigation cross just a bit; that way, you can avoid the mines. When you dock with the *Gamal Gan*, then you may not get an acknowledgment when you request landing—remember the bug that seems to keep Paladin from responding to your questions? Anyway, just request landing, get within about 1400 meters of the *Gamal Gan*, and you'll get the automatic landing sequence.

After, you see the *Gamal Gan* jump into the Ayer's Rock system. It's a neat sequence. You can actually request docking with *Gamal Gan* at nav 1, and avoid the Gothri.





Afterwards, Ayer's Rock hails the *Gamal Gan*, and gives them a pass phrase, expecting the counter-phrase. Translated from Kilrathi, it means "Beyond the eyes of my enemy, I shall prepare for the day of his destruction." Talon guesses the right response: "I, Sharhi of Hhallas, swear to avenge my honor." Ayer's Rock takes the sign, asks where the *Gamal Gan*'s normal captain is. Talon tells of some bogus damage. Paladin says they'll collect whatever intelligence they can.

AYER'S ROCK SERIES

You're finally at Ayer's Rock. In this series, you'll end up destroying Ayer's Rock's value to the Mandarins no matter what you do, either by blowing its cover, which would force the Mandarins to regroup, or by destroying the base with the Mandarin leadership on the base.

The main event in this series, however, is a rematch with Zachary Colson. If you let Jazz go, then you lose the game—so shoot to kill.

If you eject from any of these missions, the Kilrathi will shoot you.

Wingman: Maniac

Ship: Morningstar

Victory conditions: Destroy Jazz's ship in third mission; believe it or not, destroying Ayer's Rock is not the goal of this series.

If you lose: You go to the "second chances" series, mission 3.

If you win: You win the game.

AYER'S ROCK MISSION 0

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Gothri, 5 Sarthas

Scorpion reports in. The Mandarins are scrambling two wings of fighters. They're curious about the screen on the *Gamal Gan*, so they're sending fighters to take a closer look. Paladin feels that the best defense is a good offense, so they launch the Morningstars. As you see in the map, you'll encounter five Gothri, so use the Morningstar's speed and triple

particle cannons to destroy or drive off the enemy. The Sartha are simple by comparison; just don't let them get on your tail, as those neutron guns can destroy your ship fairly quickly. Stop and give your shields time to recharge fully between encounters.

Later, you receive more from Scorpion. Ayer's Rock is the main Mandarin base. All the Mandarin leaders are on the Rock right now! Scorpion is then jammed. Paladin hails the *Concordia* to come destroy the Rock, but the *Concordia*'s busy with an attack that they're repelling. Apparently the *Concordia* won't be providing any backup for us.

Scorpion's tight beam transmission was certainly intercepted and analyzed, Paladin says, so the Kilrathi are no doubt on their way. Let's launch and meet them in space.



AYER'S ROCK MISSION 1

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 4 Sartha, 2 Fralthra, 3 Sabres

The *Gamal Gan* is going to run for the nearest jump point. You'll clear away any enemy, and rendezvous with the *Gamal Gan* at the jump point.

This is not a critical mission, so you needn't kill the Fralthras to continue. It is quite nice to get out of the way, however. The Mace will destroy one with no setup required whatsoever—just point and shoot. The Sabres are some tough customers, rather like Gothri: something of an even match for a Morningstar. Just fly fast, lock targets, and don't stop shooting at an enemy ship until it's dead.



Those Sabres make this the toughest mission in Special Operations 2; very rarely can I destroy them and still have enough ship left to take out the Fralthra. Remember, however, that this isn't a critical mission, so you



Gamal Gan/Grimalkin

can run back to *Gamal Gan* just about any time that you like; it won't affect the outcome of the game.



4 Sartha

Nav 1

3 Sabres



2 Fralthra

Nav 2

Later, en route to the jump point Scorpion gets a message to the *Gamal Gan*. They're evacuating Ayer's Rock, in anticipation of the *Concordia*. Talon responds to Scorpion that the *Concordia's* not coming any time soon. Paladin cautions him not to say that on an open chan-

nel, but it's too late! The Kilrathi (in the form of Admiral Rha'rhi—not the Emperor, just someone with a similar name) have captured Scorpion ... and heard Talon's answer. "You should hire better help, Taggart. Guard, you may now execute that Terran spy," Rha'rhi taunts Paladin.

AYER'S ROCK MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Kamekh, 6 Sabres, Ayer's Rock

The *Concordia* was supposed to come to Ayer's Rock on Paladin's vector and polish it off, but they're evacuating Ayer's Rock, and the *Concordia* is busy with problems of its own. Paladin says that if Ayer's Rock is to be destroyed, we've got to do it. The Morningstars launch. Maniac is in. Your character wants it because of Jazz.

This is a simple mission except for the Sabres that you'll find at Ayer's Rock. En route, you'll meet two Kamekh. When you get to Ayer's Rock, you should just get the Rock in your sights from about 6,000 meters, and

then launch the Mace; that'll destroy Ayer's Rock. Then you can run away, and you needn't even deal with all the Sabres.

Afterwards, if you succeed, you get a basic debriefing. "Any sign of Minx, Jazz, or the Morningstar?" Paladin asks. "None at all," you reply. Then, on the bridge of the *Concordia*, Angel reports to Tolwyn "the Kamekh is making its attack approach now." Tolwyn says to fire the main gun. Angel replies that the main gun may not work, and in fact may blow—it's only at 60 percent capacity. Tolwyn says do it anyway. The Kamekh is destroyed. Back on *Gamal Gan*, Minx calls from an escape pod. She's dying, but Jazz escaped with the Morningstar! "That bastard left me here to die. Kill him for me! Kill him——" she pleads.



Gamal Gan/Grimalkin

2 Kamekh



4 Sabres



Ayer's Rock

If you failed at Ayer's Rock, then the same scene happens on the *Concordia's* bridge, but now Minx calls to gloat. She says that you failed, but your mission wasn't a complete failure, as they must evacuate Ayer's Rock. But Jazz is on his way to kill you. "Jazz has sworn to kill you, and I think this time he'll succeed."

AYER'S ROCK MISSION 3

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 3 Sabres, Jazz in a Morningstar

Track down and destroy Jazz—once and for all. Maniac's drive fails, so you're in this alone. Notice that you're really low on fuel after the jump; the Morningstar must use the same fuel for jumps as it does for hyperdrive.

You can best get rid of the three Sabres by hitting the first one head-on, as you've got better shields than it does. Then lock the second as a target, and follow it until it dies. The third will then be simple.

After you jump, you'll meet Jazz. Don't jump until your shields have regenerated fully. He's not really that tough; just don't let him ram you



Gamal Gan/Grimalkin

when you're damaged. All in all, Special Operations 2 turns out to not be that tough; there is a tough mission (the second one in this series), but it's also one that you can choose to skip and still win.

Once you've finished Jazz, you dock at the *Concordia*.

Back at the *Concordia*, Tolwyn congratulates you.

"Good work! I knew you wouldn't let Colson get away." "And Ayer's Rock has been destroyed, Admiral," you reply. "I'm sending a commendation to ConFed



3 Sabres

Nav 1

High Command for your work in this sector," the Admiral says. "Once again, you've proved yourself a true hero."

Meanwhile, at Kubla Meth, two days later, the Emperor says "My... heir. Is it true that you failed to get a Morningstar, and personally destroyed the Mandarin base?" "The Mandarins had outlived their usefulness to us. And while we did not get the Morningstar, we kept the *Concordia* busy. By doing so, we were able to destroy the 6th Battle Fleet, and drive out the Confederation entirely. The *Concordia* is now getting orders to retreat from the sector." "Grandson—I am pleased! Now nothing can stop us from conquering Earth itself!"

Jazz's helmet floats in space, and the credits roll. Once they're finished, we see Maniac, still trying to get his jump drive to work. "Where's

S&R when you need them?" he moans. The story will be concluded, we are told, in Wing Commander III.

If you kill Jazz, but failed at Ayer's Rock, then you're still pretty much okay. Tolwyn congratulates you. You apologize for not destroying Ayer's Rock, but note that its usefulness as a Mandarin base is over. Tolwyn commends you. "I'm sending a commendation to ConFed High Command for your work in this sector," the Admiral says. "Once again, you've proved yourself a true hero."

At Kabla Meth, Thrakhath reports that the 6th has been destroyed, and the *Concordia* has received orders to retreat. "Grandson, I am pleased! Now prepare our fleet for the assault on the Terran homeworlds!"

"SECOND CHANCE" SERIES

In Special Operations 1, this extra series was called "Series 5." It was easier to identify, but I think the game designers wanted a player to be unsure of whether or not she was on the losing track, so they named series 5 a "Canewdon" series. I call them "Second Chance" just to distinguish them.

As mentioned before, you do not fly these as a series. They are all separate missions that you fly as a kind of "second chance" to get back on the winning track. They tend to be fairly simple, but stringent in their requirements. For that reason, I'll focus on their requirements in these write-ups.

"SECOND CHANCE" MISSION 0

Mission type: Patrol

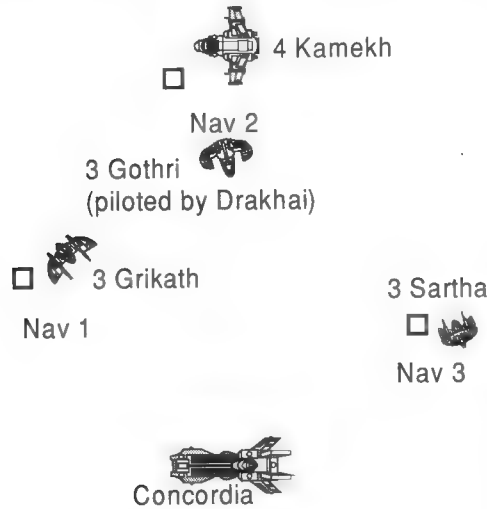
Enemies/obstacles: 3 Grikaths (Drakhai), 3 Gothri (Drakhai), 4 Kamekh, 3 Sartha

Prince Thrakhath suggests that they ignore the Morningstar for a while, and concentrate on the *Concordia*. You must destroy all of these fighters, or one of them will get back to Kubla Meth and report our position. If that happens, then we're dead.



You fly a Sabre with a wingman named Kaiser. There are no tricks, no shortcuts. You've got to hit all the nav points, and destroy all of the enemy.

A few things to keep in mind: First, take out the first wave of Grikath by locking onto the first ship and firing a Pilum missile. Then follow up with full guns, and the first one's usually gone. Then run away and re-



charge your shields, then wade back in and do the same thing. Treat the Gothri the same way. Do not chase the last Gothri if it runs away. Instead, go after the four Kamekh. Use the particle beams only, as they've got such a long reach. Then, when you get within 1500 meters, turn around and use your rear guns. The four Kamekh will actually be a piece of cake. Then just pay attention when going after

the Sarthas, and you'll have no trouble. Finally, sweep the nav points several times before docking. The final Gothri may take a few trips to nav 2 before it'll come out. If you miss it, you lose. All enemy ships must be destroyed.

"SECOND CHANCE" MISSION 1

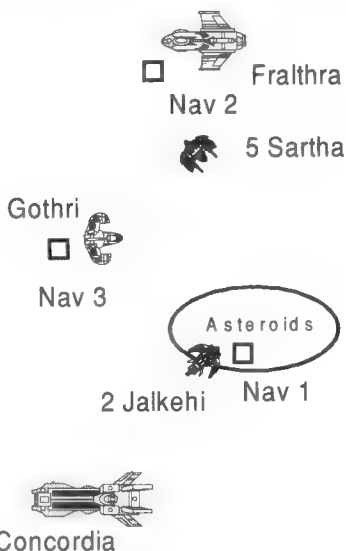
Mission type: Patrol

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Jalkehis, asteroids, 5 Sarthas and a Fralthra, 1 Gothri

The traitor is speaking to a Kilrathi on the comm unit. The Kilrathi says "It has been some time since your last report." The traitor responds that everything's gone according to schedule, so far, but...there's this one pilot (they're talking about your character). He's highly intuitive, and he

possesses extraordinary combat skill. He may jeopardize my escape plans. "The Hero of K'tithrak Mang. Does he fly regular patrols now?" the Kilrathi responds (as if they didn't know). "Yes. I am transmitting the time and coordinates of his next patrol to you now..." says the traitor.

You fly a Broadsword with Crossbones as your wingman. The main thing is to be careful in the rocks against the Jalkehis. Don't take chances, and take your time. Then, if you're undamaged, go against the Sartha that you see in the map. Work fast, use the turrets, don't try to turn to follow a Sartha—you're too slow. Switch around the turrets and kill the Sarthas, fast. Then you can take your time torpedoing the Fralthra, leaving only the Gothri. Your armor and turrets will help balance out the Gothri's speed and guns.



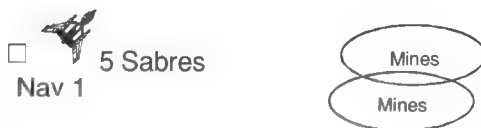
"SECOND CHANCE" MISSION 2

Mission type: Strike

Enemies/obstacles: 5 Sabres, 2 Broadwords

After the jump into the Ayer's Rock system, Ayer's Rock activates defense systems and sends fighters out.

Gamal Gan/Grimalkin



Just to be sure, the Morningstars are sent out.

You *must* destroy all the seven enemy ships that you see in the map; or any survivors will report your location to the enemy, and the game's lost. You fly with Maniac.

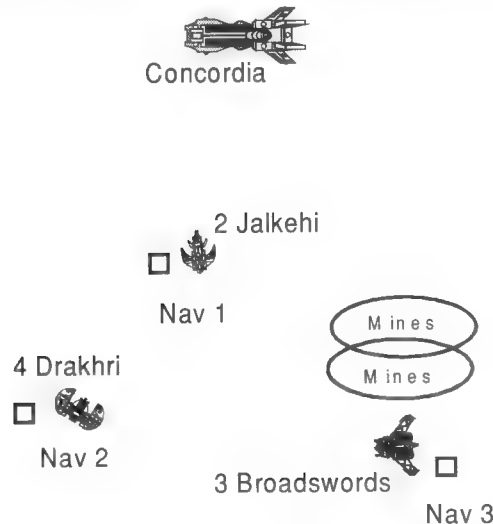
"SECOND CHANCE" MISSION 3

Mission type: Patrol/Retreat

Enemies/obstacles: 2 Jalkehis, 4 Drakhri, 3 Broadwords

Jazz is on the loose, and you missed the chance to put him out of action permanently. The Kilrathi are hitting us hard, and the Confederation is abandoning Deneb.

Angel comforts you with the knowledge that the Mandarin base is now disbanded. The *Concordia* must retreat (orders from HQ) from



Deneb. We'll send out wings to clear the way for the retreat. She says you've been flying hard recently, and you needn't take a patrol. You insist on flying. "I want to take one last look before we abandon this place to the Kilrathi." You fly with Maniac. If you get to this mission, you've lost.

Well, assuming that you succeeded in this game, then your reputation is restored, you're flying with your best girl, and the Kil-

rathi are on the run...towards Earth. What'll happen next? I sure don't know. I wish Origin would get Wing Commander III done soon.

Until then, there's Wing Commander Academy and Privateer. We'll take a look at them in the last two chapters.

**FLYING WING
COMMANDER
ACADEMY**



T H I R T E E N



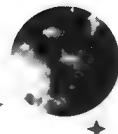
In mid-1993, Origin released *Wing Commander Academy*. It doesn't really fit into the other games inasmuch as it does not have a story line; it's just a mission simulator.

In *Wing Commander Academy*, you can build a mission, complete with nav points, bad guys, minefields, asteroids, and ejected pilots to pick up. *Wing Commander Academy* fits into the *Wing Commander II* games in that the ships that you can fly or fly against are featured in *Wing Commander II*, *Special Operations 1*, or *Special Operations 2*, with just these exceptions:

- Fralthra
- Gothri
- Enemy starbases
- *Waterloo*-class ships
- *Clydesdale*-class ships
- *Free Trader*-class ships
- *Concordia*
- Thrakhath's fighter
- Kamekhs

For most of them, that's not a big deal, but I do miss the ability to practice bombing runs on Fralthra or enemy starbases. There is a starbase offered, but it's only a friendly starbase, so you can't set up a scenario where you've got to attack a Kilrathi starbase defended by a number of fighters.

The lack of the Gothri is the other great flaw in *Academy*. Gothris are darned tough customers, and I'd really like to be able to set up a mission wherein I've got to zap two Fralthra guarded by six Gothris.



In partial recompense for this, Origin has included two new ships, a very powerful heavy fighter called the Wraith, and a powerful new Kilrathi ship called the Jrathek. They're interesting to fly, but I'd have preferred to be able to fly against the Gothri and the Fralthra.

Academy allows you to set the "intelligence" level of each enemy ship. I guess that's supposed to allow you to set up aces, but even at the maximum intelligence level, 4, they're not as tough as the Drakhai. A "Drakhai" option would have been nice.

This is not to say that you shouldn't go get Academy if you haven't already got it, as it allows you to build some neat scenarios; I'll make some suggestions in a page or two.

MISSION CAPABILITIES

The missions that you can build in Academy are composed of nav points, just as the regular game is. You can have up to eight objects on the screen besides your ship (sometimes only seven, although I can't figure out when the seven-object limit is in effect and when the limit is eight). For example, that means that you could have an asteroid field (one object) and seven enemy fighters.

You can only have one asteroid field, or one minefield, per nav point. You can't have both asteroids and mines at any given location, but you can opt to have neither. The maximum number of nav points in Academy is four.

You can save your missions, and the game allows you to give them fairly long names. There is also a "gauntlet" that is something like the TrainSim from Wing Commander I. You choose a ship, and the game then throws enemies at you until you finish a certain number of them, or you die. I've never been able to zap enough bad guys to finish the gauntlet, so I can't tell you how far you've got to go in order to "win" the gauntlet. The highest that I've gotten is past 10 waves of enemies; each wave consists of three wings. If you want to survive the gauntlet, I suggest that you fly it with a powerful ship, like the Wraith.

CONTROLLING THE GAME

From a programming perspective, the game is very robust; I have never had it crash on me. It's the first of Origin's Wing Commander games to use their new JEMM memory manager. (Strike Commander and Privateer are two others.) This memory manager is VCPI-compliant; translated to English, that means that you will not be able to get Academy to work under OS/2, Windows, or Windows NT.

The "Origin" cheat does not work. So far as I can see, there is no programmer cheat here, no "finger of God" or invulnerability mode. However, you can slow the game down with Alt-plus or Alt-minus, as with some of the other games.

MISSION SUGGESTIONS

If you've got Academy, here's some suggestions on how to have some fun with it.

ON THE ROCKS

Test your rock-fighting skill: Set up seven Grikaths in an asteroid field against a Broadsword. Only fast Pilum work will save you here, as you've got to destroy a few Griks quickly, or their neutron guns will chew you to pieces.

For a greater challenge, replace the Broadsword with the Crossbow, or even replace the Grikaths with Sartha. Don't forget to set the intelligence of the enemy to level 4.

RETRIEVAL UNDER FIRE

Pit a Broadsword against three Ralatha. The goal of the mission, however, isn't to destroy the Ralatha; it is to retrieve four data pods (or ejected pilots—it doesn't matter). Place the pods amongst the Ralatha. You do not have enough torpedoes to destroy three Ralatha, so you'll have to hone your tractor-beam-under-fire skills.

Once you've got that down, add a minefield.



SHOOTING STRAKHAS IN A BARREL

Run a Sabre against seven Strakhas. It's good stealth-fighter practice and teaches you to lock a target and blast away until it's dead, even if the fighter is a quick one that can easily evade you. The Crossbow also makes a good ship to fly in this mission; the biggest challenge, however, is the Epee, that shieldless ship.

As a matter of fact, any mission with Epees against seven of anything will be challenging.

RETURN TO GETTYSBURG

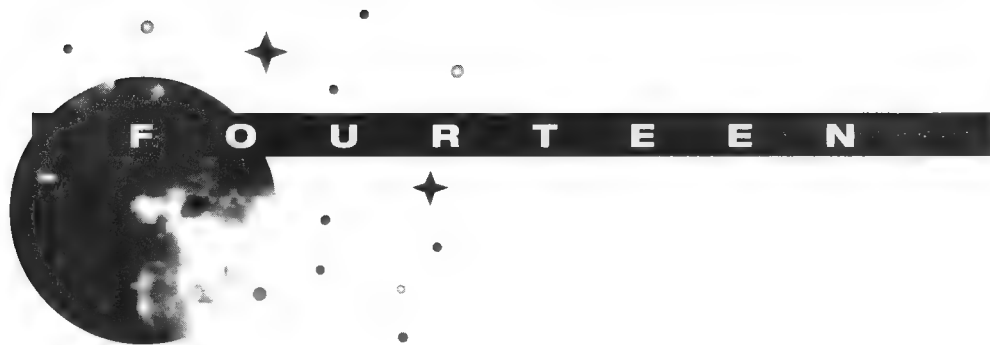
Fly something against seven Sabres. I don't think it's possible to win against seven Sabres in an Epee, although it's possible with a Ferret and some luck, although you'll have to rely heavily on afterburners to get close enough in to use the mass drivers on the Sabres. Matched against a Broadsword, seven Sabres pose quite a challenge, although not an insuperable one. In a Morningstar, you can try running away with the afterburners, then turning around and lobbing the Mace at the pack of enemy ships; that may destroy two or three of them, after which you can use the guns.

Put the battle in an asteroid field for extra interest. It will actually help a player in a Broadsword, as it takes away the Sabre's speed advantage.

**PLAYING
PRIVATEER**



F O U R T E E N



Years ago, a game company by the name of Electronic Arts designed a game that was the first of a genre. In *Starflight*, you had to equip and staff a spaceship and then go out into the galaxy to solve a mystery. Something was destroying star systems, and the Earth was on the path of destruction.

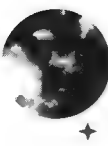
You solved the mystery by first of all making money to pay for ship upgrades, exploring planets to find minerals and life forms to sell, and either fighting with or negotiating with aliens that you came across. It was a neat game, even if it was built with kludgy EGA graphics, and solving the mystery took a few weeks of off-time work.

Since then, several games of this sort have popped up with the same kind of story line. *Starflight* spawned a *Starflight 2*, and another game, *Star Control 2*, included a story that was roughly the same, but used more modern sounds and graphics to tell the story. All these games have an economic part, inasmuch as you've got to make money somehow to outfit your ship. Also, they often include some references to a mysterious "Precursor" race, a species of aliens that once ruled the galaxy but who vanished mysteriously billions of millennia ago, and who left behind tantalizing traces of their existence.

Privateer is Origin's entry into this field. Origin tried both to tell a "Precursor" story and to fit it into the *Wing Commander* Universe. The game is not as exciting as its forebears, but it's still got some positive points.

GAME OVERVIEW

The *Privateer* game basically has two parts to it. In the first part, you travel around the sector, looking for jobs to perform with your hand-me-down ship; you're basically playing a Han Solo-type role, getting



missions and eking out enough profit (you hope) to keep bread on the table and to keep upgrading your ship.

The second part of the game starts whenever you want it to. You start the plot by going to the New Detroit system and talking to Ernesto Sandoval in the bar at New Detroit. Sandoval gives you a mission, and then you've got to fulfill it, or you've lost the game. Once you successfully complete the Sandoval mission, you'll be directed to other missions, leading you to the game's end. You really should not start the plot until you've got a powerful ship, because you won't get much of a chance to reoutfit yourself once you've started the game.

BUILDING A SHIP

The most fun part of *Privateer* is probably the first part, the part where you struggle up from flying a barely-equipped Tarsus to a fully-loaded Orion, Galaxy, or Centurion. But which ship to buy, and how to outfit it?

The *Privateer* documentation indicates that you can decide on a life of piracy, mercenary work, or shipping. Being a merchant is very difficult, as it's really hard to eke out a living by moving freight around—and you attract pirates like flies to honey. Rebuilding your ship every time you come into port soon gets old.

Being a mercenary is probably the most straightforward route. Take the missions that ask you to patrol a bunch of nav points. Typically, all you've got to do is touch a number of nav points, and you'll usually find that just one of them has enemy ships on it. You can really make good money by getting three patrol missions; that's not always possible, but it can be done now and then. Don't take the missions that take you out of the system until you've got a powerful ship. The outsystem missions look lucrative, but you often end up dealing with a lot of pirates on your journeys, cutting into your profit margins.

All in all, most *Privateer* players that I've spoken with end up agreeing that the Centurion is the ship that you want. Outfit it with two missile tubes, and fill the tubes with image-recognition missiles. (This, by the way, is also good advice for the Tarsus owner; being able to lob twin missiles will get you out of many a tough spot.) Then add four tachyon

cannons (see Chapter 3 for an analysis of guns in Privateer) to the front of the ship. Get the high-end radar as soon as possible, as the ITTS-type tracking feature is very valuable. Put a tractor beam on the rear turret, an engine upgrade 3, and a shield upgrade 2 on the Centurion.

That's what you want eventually; what about getting started? If you want to send your Tarsus out to do battle, then you probably want to acquire these things, in this order:

- dual lasers
- tungsten armor
- image-recognition missiles
- afterburners
- engine upgrade 1
- dual meson blasters (dump the lasers at that point)
- a radar that shows colors of enemies
- ECM level 3
- repair droid

GENERAL TIPS

This game is different from the other Origin games, so here are a few Privateer-specific suggestions.

- Stay with the Tarsus for as long as you can. Do not upgrade until you can afford a fully laid-out system. It's much better to have a fully loaded Tarsus than a bare-bones Orion.
- Don't take the merc bounty jobs if you can; the hunters have nice hardware, and if you make them angry, you'll have lots more fights on your hands, and fights with Demons and Centurions, neither of which are weak ships.
- Don't upgrade to the top line shields. Speed and firepower may be of more value to you, and the engine's output either goes to shields, guns, or afterburners.



- Cargo trips can be risky and take a long time. The life of a merchant is not an exciting or lucrative one.
- Look for the jobs referring to a lone Retro, pirate, or Kilrathi. That way, you're guaranteed that you'll have to take on only one opponent. It also means that, when multiple ships appear on your screen, you can run away and not fear messing up a mission.
- Run away from missions where you don't make any money. Don't attack random pirates or Retros.
- When you're leaving an asteroid field, don't engage the autonav as soon as the autonav light appears. I've had the autonav crash me into an asteroid.
- As soon as you venture outsystem, join the Mercenary's Guild. It gives you access to four more missions wherever you go that there's a Guild office.
- If you are not fulfilling a mission objective, then activate the invulnerability feature. If you are doing something required for the mission, then shut it off, or you will automatically fail the mission.
- Don't forget to buy the space maps. Buy all four and get a discount.

And if you get really tired of flying missions to earn money, you can always get one of the "cheat" programs mentioned in Chapter 5 and just give yourself \$5,000,000. Just tell anyone who asks that a rich aunt died... actually, don't use the cheat programs. You get a real sense of accomplishment from working your way up to a fully-equipped ship. Don't miss out on this with the cheats.

THE MISSIONS OF PRIVATEER

The remaining part of the chapter chronicles the missions of Privateer. You'll notice that the mission write-ups are simpler for Privateer than they were for the other games. The reason for that is simply that the missions are simple. There really are no tricks like the ones that you found in the earlier games. If you're shipping something from one point to

another, then you have to just go from the source to destination, without any stops along the way, as stopping in mid-mission constitutes losing. (It's a dumb rule, yes, but there's nothing to be done about it.)

Furthermore, it's not possible to accurately map the missions, as there are randomly placed bad guys in the missions. All you usually can be certain of is the number and type of bad guys.

Even if missions fly with certainty, there still would be little need for maps, as the variety of ships that you fly against is tiny. In the vast majority of missions, your only enemy is a Talon. There are a few missions that involve tangling with Kilrathi, but they're much later.

In these mission write-ups, I'll explain what's happening in the story line, how many missions you must fly, and what the missions require. You can't be certain how many enemies you'll run into, and there are no medals here, just very simple victory conditions.

- If it's a cargo run, go to the destination point and don't stop anywhere along the way.
- If it's a mercenary job, go destroy the enemy.
- If it's a courier job (like Lynch 1), go meet something.
- If it's an escort job, escort your charge to its destination, destroying enemies that attack it.

Other than that, if there are surprises, I'll describe them here.

SANDOVAL SERIES

You start the game's plot in the bar at New Detroit. You probably got there because you talked to a bartender somewhere who suggested that if you're ever in New Detroit, then you should look up an old friend of his, Ernesto Sandoval.

Anyway, when you get to the bar, Sandoval greets you. He has a shipping job that he wants you to do, a perfectly legal shipment of iron to the Liverpool refinery. As collateral, he gives you a mysterious alien artifact. This artifact doesn't look like it's from either a Kilrathi world, or any other world that you know.



As with all Privateer missions, to complete this series (it's only one mission), you must get to Liverpool, and don't stop at any planet between New Detroit and Liverpool. The Liverpool base is in Newcastle, which you get to from New Detroit by going through the New Constantinople system.

There are no major obstacles here, save for the usual random pirates and retros.

TAYLA SERIES

You return to New Detroit, only to find that Sandoval isn't there. Instead, a woman named Tayla meets you there. She tells you that Sandoval has been killed, and killed because of the artifact.

Your interest is piqued. If this artifact is so valuable, then what is it? Should you be worried? Tayla claims that she can get you information on the artifact, but that she needs something in return. She wants you to do four shipping runs for her, and she'll not only pay you for the trips, she'll also get you information on the artifact.

TAYLA MISSION 1

Tayla turns out to be associated with some pirates that work out of a secret base in Pentonville. The Pentonville runs are all a pain in the neck because the pirate base sits in the middle of an asteroid field, and, as it's usually surrounded by pirates (after all, this is a pirate base), that usually means you've got to do at least one dogfight in the rocks per Tayla trip.

Tayla's first mission is for you to take a cargo of plastics from New Detroit to Pentonville. You'll be attacked at least once by pirates, as well as the usual random Retros and even Hunters, if you've made them mad by now.

As you'll have to handle three Talons in an asteroid field, here's the best approach. When following the game's plot, you should be flying a Centurion. Equip the Centurion with two missile tubes, and fill those tubes with image-recognition missiles. The IR missiles are better than the friend-or-foe missiles because the IR missiles go to the enemy that you

lock your targeting computer onto. (The friend-or-foe missiles just lock onto whichever enemy is closest.) When multiple ships attack you in Privateer, they tend to use the “squeeze play” wherein one gets in front of you to draw your fire, and one gets behind you, and blasts you while you’re busy with the first guy.

To handle two ships at once, lock your targeting computer onto one ship, and fire two missiles—you can do that if you have two missile tubes. Then turn around and start dogfighting with the second ship. Your targeting computer will still be locked on the ship behind you, so fire off a missile or two every fifteen seconds or so. The missiles will eventually finish off the ship behind you, and your guns will zap the one in front of you.

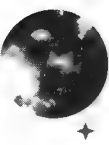
To get from New Detroit to Pentonville, either go New Detroit–New Constantinople–Junction–119CE–Pentonville or New Detroit–Saxtogue–Oxford–1927–119CE–Pentonville.

When you’ve finished the mission at Pentonville speak further with Tayla at the bar there.

TAYLA MISSION 2

Now you find out what Tayla’s main line of work is—she’s a drug smuggler. She handles a drug called Brilliance, and it’s an acknowledged contraband item. If a militia or the ConFeds search you while you’re carrying it, then they’ll attack you (“all units—close and terminate.”) If the militia or the ConFeds attack you, do not return fire. First of all, there’s usually a bunch of their ships around, so you’re asking for a serious fight. Second, you’re not getting paid to wax cops, so why take the damage? Third, and most important, if you return fire, then the militia and the ConFeds will become your enemy, and you don’t want that to happen; they’re everywhere, and making an enemy out of those guys means that accomplishing missions gets a lot tougher. Taking out Broadwords and Paradigms in your Centurion is something of a tall order.

All in all, the best way to handle the authorities when they detect your contraband is simply to run away. There are no missions in this series where you’d have to run through asteroids in order to get away, so use those afterburners.



This mission requires that you run some Brilliance up to the Troy system. Just go Pentonville–119CE–Junction–Pender’s Star–Troy.

Tayla will tell you that as long as you’re working for her, the pirates will leave you alone. That’s half true; on your way out, the pirates will not give you a hard time. When you’re returning to claim your pay, however, they’ll attack you.

The militia in Troy will detect the contraband; just light up the afterburners and zip past them right into the station. They will have forgotten about it when you leave Troy.

TAYLA MISSION 3

A similar mission to the last one, except that you go to New Constantinople. The route is Pentonville–119CE–Junction–New Constantinople. Again, just zip past the ConFeds and any militia that you happen across.

TAYLA MISSION 4

More Brilliance to New Constantinople. Now, New Constantinople is supposed to be closest thing to a seat of government here. Why do they need so many drugs? (I merely ask the question.)

You complain about all the ConFed and militia heat, and Tayla installs a secret compartment in your ship that you can use to smuggle more effectively.

There’s a flyboy by the name of William Riordan who’s been running Brilliance for Tayla for a while, and apparently you’ve displaced him. He’s not very happy about that, so he intercepts you on this last mission, and attacks you, with a few of his pirate buddies. Riordan flies a Centurion, so it’s probably best to just target him while he’s still talking to you, and launch about six missiles, then follow up with full guns (four tachyon cannons, I hope).

After that mission, Tayla directs you to a Mafia boss type named Roman Lynch. He speaks like a bad imitation of Jimmy Cagney, and you find him at the bar in New Constantinople.

LYNCH SERIES

Roman Lynch doesn't require that you run drugs—a great relief, I'm sure, to many. No, Mr. Lynch only requires that you assassinate people and smuggle his felonious cousin out of the system. The Lynch missions are pretty straightforward mercenary missions.

One positive feature of the Lynch missions is the verbal byplay with Miggs, Lynch's muscle-bound bodyguard. My favorite is when Miggs says, in response to something that you've said to Lynch, "Yeah... because when you assume, you make an ass out of me," you comment, "You know, if a little knowledge is a dangerous thing, then Miggs should have the entire empire of Kilrah worried."

LYNCH MISSION 1

In the first mission, Lynch tells you to go to Pentonville and deliver a message to a Captain Seelig. Apparently the Captain agreed to deliver some contraband for Lynch, but decided instead to hold onto it. You're supposedly just going to tell the guy that Lynch is disappointed in him.

What actually happens is that when you talk to Seelig, he gets angry and opens fire on you. Now, you can choose to kill him, or you can simply run away; you complete the mission either way. Your character does a lot of posturing about how unhappy he is to have gotten stuck with a murder job, which is something I don't quite understand. If you've gotten this far in the game, then you've torched a pile of Retros and pirates at a minimum. We know that Captain Seelig is a drug runner and a pirate—else why would he hang around Pentonville—so what's the problem? Perhaps it's because you've just come off a stint as a smuggler yourself?

The route to Pentonville is New Constantinople-Junction-119CE-Pentonville.

LYNCH MISSION 2

Next, you run guns for Lynch to the planet Siva, which is in the Rigel system. This is an asteroid-laden mission. The mission's complication is a



mercenary by the name of Solomon Kroiz. Kroiz doesn't like Lynch, and attacks you when you try to deliver the weapons.

Kroiz accosts you in the middle of an asteroid field (it's on the Siva side of the jump point), so you can't really ignore him. Further, he flies a Demon, and has three Demonic assistants. Demons aren't extremely hard to destroy, but stay out of their direct line of fire. In particular, I recommend that you target Kroiz and launch a flurry of missiles at him, then finish him off with your guns. Unlike the earlier Wing Commander games, the people that you interact with, such as Thrakhath or Jazz, do not fly better than anyone else does. Kroiz's Demon is no harder to dispatch than any of the other Demons.

In any case, target and destroy a Demon quickly, as it's four-on-one and you need to even the odds fast. Get to Siva by going from New Constantinople to 44-P-IM to Rikel, or New Constantinople to New Detroit to Rikel.

LYNCH MISSION 3

The third Lynch mission is another smuggling mission, but this time you're smuggling Lynch's cousin Regis to the Romulus mining base in Castor. The route—from New Constantinople to Junction to Castor—is asteroid-free, so you can run when you don't feel like you want to gun.

Once you jump into the Castor system, you'll be greeted by ConFed forces, which detect Regis and attack you. It's best to just run away, as they won't remember you, and you can go back to New Constantinople unmolested.

LYNCH MISSION 4

There really is no mission 4 in the Lynch series. You go back to find out what Lynch's datajacker friends have found out, but Lynch says that the datajacker is stuck on the Liverpool refinery. Accept the job—if you reject it, the game won't go any further—but don't go to Liverpool. If you do go to Liverpool, you'll find Miggs waiting for you; Lynch sent him to kill you, and to recover the artifact. Don't bother going to Liverpool (unless you feel like killing Miggs); go instead to Oxford.

OXFORD SERIES

Your contact at Oxford is in the University Library. You offer to fly four missions for the University in exchange for access to the library's research facilities.

The Oxford missions are a tough bunch because three of the four are escort missions. Usually the best way to handle escort missions is to use both missiles and guns and concentrate first on whichever ship does the talking. For example, in Oxford 1, there is a Retro who broadcasts some message about how Hunter Toth is sentenced to death. Take out that Retro first, then move quickly to destroy the others. If you've got an Orion with level-5 engines and level-3 shields, then you may be able to ram a couple of enemies; on the other hand, a Centurion's four-gun weapons complement, coupled with two missile tubes, is a fast shipkiller as well.

Don't be discouraged if you lose these missions initially. Just keep playing them, and you'll finish them.

OXFORD MISSION 1

First, the library's custodian—Mr. Masterson—wants you to go defend an incoming author, Hunter Toth. Toth is a Salmon Rushdie look-alike who's been sentenced to death by the Retros, who don't like the bad things that he said about them in his book.

Toth flies a Drayman with a fair amount of shielding, so it's not totally impossible to keep him alive. He's attacked by two waves of Retros—first three, then four of them. The first attack occurs after you finish your conversation with him, when you first meet.

As mentioned a few paragraphs back, go after the Retro who talks to you first, then move in and zap the other two quickly. Even better is if you can kill the first two, then harass the last one, keeping it from attacking Toth while Toth's shields recharge. Then kill off the last Retro, and Toth will stand a better chance of surviving the second wave.



OXFORD MISSION 2

The second Oxford mission is the easiest. You're to track down and kill a pirate called Black Rhombus. He flies a Galaxy-class ship, and is escorted by Talons. Actually, you needn't "find" the ship; just go to any nav point in the Oxford system, and it'll pop up. This is really no tougher than any pirate attack; the Galaxy turns out to not be much of a challenge.

OXFORD MISSION 3

Another escort mission, this time of the *Vulcan's Forge*, a Drayman. The *Vulcan's Forge* is carrying a load of rare books and is attacked by two wings of Demons, each composed of four ships.

As the Demons have somewhat better guns than Talons, this is a difficult mission. Winning it really depends upon moving fast and zapping the Demons quickly. One way to do that really quickly is to outfit a Centurion with four tachyon cannons, as always, and two torpedo tubes.

Winning this mission depends on a few tricks. First, you've got to get good with torpedoes. Basically, you're going to get right up on an enemy, then loose one torpedo after another at it. The hard part is in developing an accurate aim, as the torpedoes are just powerful dumb-fire missiles. The second trick is to drop your shields to a minimal level.

You see, when you drop your shields to their minimum level, then you've got more power to divert to the guns. That makes it possible to fire all four guns at the same time, and for about as long as you like. (This assumes that you've got a level-3 engine upgrade.) Now, it also means that you'd better move quickly, and don't stay in one place long enough for a Demon to draw a bead on you. But if you can master torpedoes and low-shield flight, then finishing this mission is easier.

OXFORD MISSION 4

In the last Oxford mission, you defend a merchant attacked by two waves of Talons, four of them and then three of them. If you can get through the third mission, you should just apply the same techniques here. It should be a bit easier, as Talons are easier to kill than Demons.

After the mission, you gain access to the library stacks, where an analysis of the artifact indicates that it is likely a Steltek artifact. The Steltek were a race that ruled the galaxy a long, long time ago and who disappeared before the Solar System was even formed. No one knows where they went, but one theory has it that they suffered a great civil war that devastated their society. During the war, horrific engines of destruction were created, weapons whose creation created so much revulsion that the Steltek left the galaxy, and destroyed all of those weapons.

The information in the Library indicates that the authority on this is a Professor Lemuel Monkhouse, last known to be on Palan, in the Basra system. You get to Basra by going from Oxford to XXN1927 to New Detroit to Perry to Tingerhoff to Palan.

PALAN/BASRA SERIES

At this point, you go to Palan to talk to Monkhouse. At Palan, you are attacked by an infinite number of Demons. Don't bother trying to fight them, as they will just keep coming at you in waves of five or six. Zip past them and land in order to go to the bar and talk to Monkhouse. Monkhouse will tell you that he will help you if you'll get him off Palan. You agree, but he says that he's not going to run the blockade sitting just off-planet. Perhaps if you go to Basra, then you can help the Basran forces that are trying to stop the blockade of Palan.

On the way to Basra, I recommend that you go via nav 3. That way, you avoid the asteroids.

At Basra, you meet Lynn Murphy, a tough employer of mercenaries. She gives you three missions; when you finish the third, you then go to Palan and fetch Monkhouse.

MURPHY MISSION 1

The Murphy missions are all basically strike missions wherein you attack a bunch of mercenaries in Demons. The down-side of this is that once you're done with this series, then hunters always attack you, because you've established yourself as an enemy of the mercs.



In the first Murphy mission, you take on three wings of four Demons. Assuming that you're using a Centurion, you'll find that you're faster and more maneuverable than the Demons, so just take your time, don't make any mistakes, and destroy all of the enemy.

MURPHY MISSION 2

The second mission is basically the same as the first. You're trying to intercept a wing of four Demons and four Centurions who are trying to discover the location of the Basra base. (I don't quite understand why that's difficult, as Basra is on the standard Gemini sector maps, but that's the mission you get.)

I recommend that you save your missiles for the second wave, the Centurion wave.

MURPHY MISSION 3

In this mission, you attack eight Demons at Palan itself, breaking the blockade. You have Talons helping out, so be sure not to blow up any enemies.

Once you're done, go to the bar at Palan and pick up Monkhouse. Then fly back to Basra. On the way back, six Kilrathi (three Dralthi and three Gothri) attack you. I strongly recommend running away via nav 3. Killing cats is not one of your mission objectives, and destroying six of them is a tall order anyway.

Monkhouse thanks you for getting him to Basra in one piece. He tells you that the artifact that you have is the other half of a map—a map that he has the first part of.

"Long ago," he says, "the Stelte ruled the galaxy. Even then, they were more technologically advanced than us. By the time their empire crumbled, they were possessed of wonders beyond our comprehension." He retells the civil war story, and says "some say that they simply grew weary of their power, surrendered it, and even now enjoy a simple, tranquil existence at the heart of the galaxy."

That history stuff is all very nice, you say, but how can I make money with this? The map seems to be of an area just beyond Confederation

charted territory. One way to explore it is to sign up with the Exploratory Service in Rygannon.

RYGANNON SERIES

To get to Rygannon, go from Palan to Xytani to Rygannon. At Rygannon base, you meet Taryn Cross, who does your briefings for these missions.

This series is extremely hard. There are lots of rocks and lots of Kilrathi here. All missions require that you go to the sole jump point in the system to Delta, and there's rocks between the Rygannon base and the jump point; hence, you get to fly rocks every mission.

RYGANNON MISSION 1

In this mission, you scout the Delta system's four nav points. A new jump point takes you to Delta, but there's rocks on the way. At Nav 2, you'll meet two wings of pirates: first four pirates, then eight pirates. As there are rocks at Nav 2, it's a bad place to have your pirate encounter. Instead, go to Nav 3; when you see the pirates, turn around to Nav 1 and start running to give yourself plenty of clear space. Then you can use full speed to dispatch the pirates. Go to Nav 1, then return to Nav 3, and you'll find the eight pirates waiting. If you ever drop out of autopilot near nav 2 and find pirates, turn around immediately and start heading to Nav 1; they'll follow, and you can fight them in the open. That way, this mission is hard, but not impossible.

RYGANNON MISSION 2

Next, you'll go through Delta to another new system, Beta. Also, you'll encounter Captain Garrovick, who's gone space-silly and who will try to kill you; you have no choice but to kill him. No rocks between Nav 1 and the new jump point in Delta, so run full speed from the Kilrathi and pirates you'll find. There are rocks at Nav 2 in Beta. Garrovick is at Nav 3 in Beta. There are rocks at Nav 4. There seem to be pirates or Kilrathi at just about every jump point. Fly conservatively—you're not making points for making kills here; you're supposed to hit the nav points, that's all.



You'll have to do lots of fighting in asteroids, so remember: Fly at about 400 kps, and use the afterburners to shoot at a hole in the asteroids when you're trying to run to the jump point. If the Kilrathi get bloodthirsty and try to follow you, they may end up smashing into asteroids.

RYGANNON MISSION 3

This is an even more onerous mapping mission. This time, you go through Delta and the newly-mapped Beta, and explore an even newer system, Gamma. As before, you succeed in this mission by hitting the nav points. Gothri await you at Delta (four of them), and there are pirates at the jump point from Delta to Beta. By now you'll expect it, but of course, there are rocks at the jump point to Gamma. In Gamma, there are more rocks, and Kilrathi waiting for you. You get a wave of Dralthis, then Gothris, and then more Dralthis, two or three apiece. But that's just the preview for the coming attraction at nav 4, where you get two Gothris, followed by a Gothri and a Kamekh. Now, this is the first time that you'll see flak guns in this game, so I'll remind you that the flak guns on the Kamekh make a lot of noise and light, but don't amount to much. Zap the Gothri first, and then take your time with the Kamekh. That's the overview; here are the specifics and some notes on the Rygannon 3 mission.

When you leave Rygannon: 3 pirates at the base

En route to nav 3, jump to Delta: Rocks

At Delta: 2 Gothri, no rocks

At nav 5, jump to Beta: 6 pirates, no rocks.

At Beta: 4 Pirates, no rocks at Nav 5, jump point to Gamma: rocks, 4 Pirates. Pirates appear 12000 km from nav point.

At Gamma, nav 1: Rocks and Kilrathi (4 Dralthis). I dispatched three of them quickly, then led the fourth off toward Nav 2, clear of rocks. When I killed the Dralthis, nothing followed, but sometimes I get Gothri in this mission at this point. Stop and recharge shields between nav points, or you won't finish this.

Nav 2: 3 Dralhti, followed by 2 Gothri, followed by 3 Dralhti.

No rocks

Nav 3: Rocks, no enemy

Nav 4: Rocks, three Gothri, then a Gothri and a Kamekh; draw them away from the rocks before you start fighting.

Back at Beta nav 5: 4 pirates and rocks

At nav 1, jump to Delta: 4 pirates

At nav 5 in Delta: 4 pirates, then 1 pirate. No rocks, so you can run from them

At nav 1 in Delta: 4 Gothri

Jump to Rygannon from Nav 1 in Delta, then it's smooth sailing back to Rygannon.

A very tough mission...but not the toughest. That one comes next.

RYGANNON 4 MISSION

This is a nearly impossible mission. Plan to play this one about a dozen times before you get it right. Basically, you go to map yet another new sector of space, and find a derelict StelteK spaceship! Inside the spaceship, you find the crashed remains of a StelteK fighter ship, and you remove the only working piece—its gun—and mount it on your ship. But that's only the easy half of this mission. The hard part is getting back to Rygannon.

Remember to save your position when you are in the derelict. This mission will really take some playing.

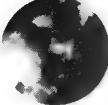
As there are so many jump points and adversaries, I'll write this up location by location.

At the jump point to Delta: Rocks.

At Delta (nav 1): 4 Gothri. No rocks.

At jump point to Beta (nav 5): 4 pirates. No rocks.

At Beta, six pirates: No rocks. Go to Nav 5 via Nav 3 to avoid some rocks.



At jump point to Gamma (nav 5): Rocks, 5 pirates, then 1 pirate.

At Gamma nav 1: 4 Gothris and rocks.

En route to Gamma nav 5: 4 Gothris.

At Gamma nav 5 (jump to Delta prime): 3 Gothris, rocks.

At Delta prime nav 1, Steltek ship: No rocks. Dock at the Steltek ship.

Inside the Steltek ship: Get the Steltek gun from the alien fighter; it'll be automatically mounted on your ship.

Back at Gamma nav 5: Rocks and 3 Gothri.

En route to jump point back to Beta: You'll probably meet an egg-shaped thing with glowing green protrusions. It is a Steltek drone. You cannot destroy it, so just avoid it; run away when possible. You'll also meet 3 Gothri.

At jump point to Beta: Rocks and more Gothri or Dralhti (it varies) and if you haven't met the drone by now, you will probably see it here. I was able to destroy the Kilrathi by flying in and out of the 12,000 "magic circle" around the jump point, the point that defines where the rocks start. I was trying to entice them out of the rocks, but the Kilrathi wouldn't come out. After I'd been doing this for a bit, an explosion occurred. All the Kilrathi were gone but one, and he was badly damaged. I think they crashed into asteroids.

At Beta nav point 5 (jump from Delta): 4 pirates, rocks. Go back to nav 1 via nav 3 to avoid rocks at nav 2.

At Beta nav point 1: No rocks, but 4 pirates.

Delta nav 5 (from Beta): No rocks, but 4 pirates.

Delta nav 1 (jump point to Rygannon): No rocks, 4 Dralhti

Rygannon nav 2 (jump point from Delta): No bad guys; rocks.

Then go to Rygannon and say good-bye to Taryn Cross.

A final thought about this series: About one half of the bad guys are pirates in this series. Maybe you could become a pirate before taking on this job, and then the pirates wouldn't attack you. You become a pirate by destroying a few Draymen.

THE PERRY SERIES

By now, you're being followed everywhere by that stupid green drone. There's nothing that you can do to kill it, and it ends up killing you half the time. If you want it off your back, you'll need help.

Go to any mining base's bar, and you'll meet Sandra Goodin. She's the Admiral's assistant on Perry; if you've ever tried to go into the Admiral's office at Perry, she's the one that tells you to get lost.

Anyway, Goodin's been looking for you. She'll tell you to go see the Admiral at Perry, and he'll help you get rid of the Steltek drone.

PERRY MISSION 1

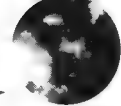
The first mission is just getting to Perry. At some point, you'll be attacked by about three waves of five Retros who want to kill you because you're bringing more technology to the world. That's the only obstacle, but fifteen Talons is enough to cause you some trouble if you're not careful.

Once you're at Perry, go to the Admiral's office. Admiral Terrell explains that the Confederation needs your help. It seems that the Kilrathi must have some kind of secret weapon, because the fleet's being decimated. The trail leads to you, however. The drone that's following you around is a Kilrathi secret weapon, the Admiral claims, although he doesn't know why. So they need you as bait to lure it into a final battle. You're to rendezvous with the fleet at Blockade Point Tango, where the ConFed fleet will destroy the Kilrathi weapon.

PERRY MISSION 2

On your way to Blockade Point Tango, you encounter a Steltek ship piloted by an honest-to-God Steltek!

The Steltek sees that you have a Steltek gun, so you must have found an enclave of Steltek technology. The Steltek threatens to annihilate you if you don't tell it where you found the gun. You point out that if you're dead, then you can't tell it where the technology is—so you ask for something in return for the information.



The StelteK explains that the drone is not a Kilrathi secret weapon, but instead something built by the StelteK to home in on StelteK technology. It will seek you out and destroy you, the alien explains.

In return for you giving the StelteK the coordinates of the derelict ship, the StelteK charges up your StelteK gun to a power that can destroy the drone. You then meet the fleet, which is of course helpless against the StelteK drone. You destroy it, and the game's over. The route to Blockade Point Tango, by the way, is Perry–Nitir–Blockade Point Tango.

THE END OF THE GAME?

When you return to Perry, you get a “thank you” from the Admiral, and that's about it. A somewhat anticlimactic ending to Privateer.

And speaking of endings...that's all there is to say (I hope) about the eight games of the Wing Commander universe. If you haven't gotten all the games yet, go get them. (And don't read the mission write-ups until you've at least tried the games—that's cheating!)

Even if you've completed all the games, you can continue to find new challenges. For example, try playing one of the games with the intention of destroying every single enemy ship. Or play a game without saving your position—try to really survive a game! Good luck, have fun, and if you should come across a ship piloted by Mark “Big Dog” Minasi, you'd better stay friendly!

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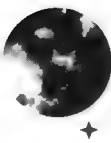
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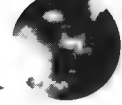
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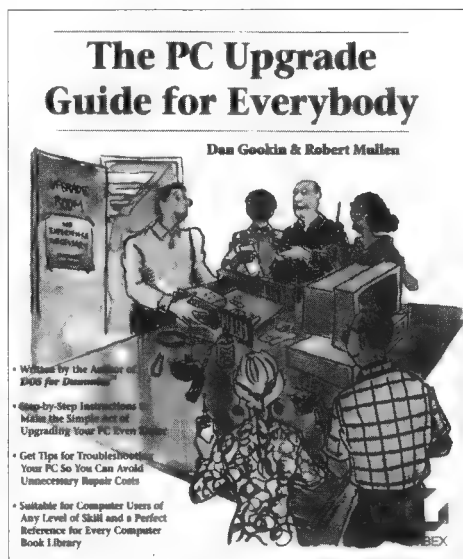
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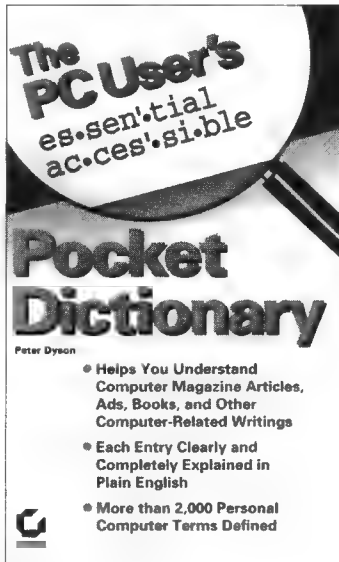
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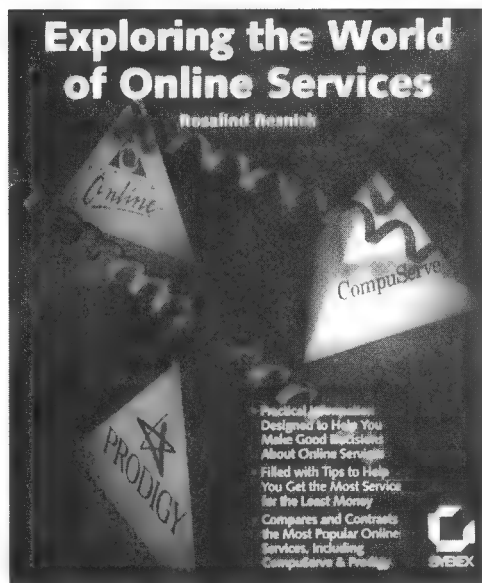
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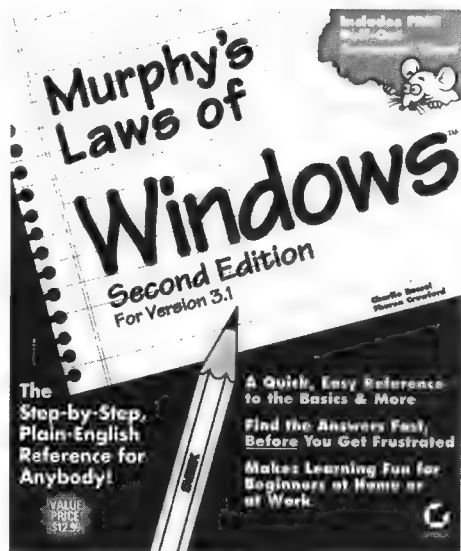
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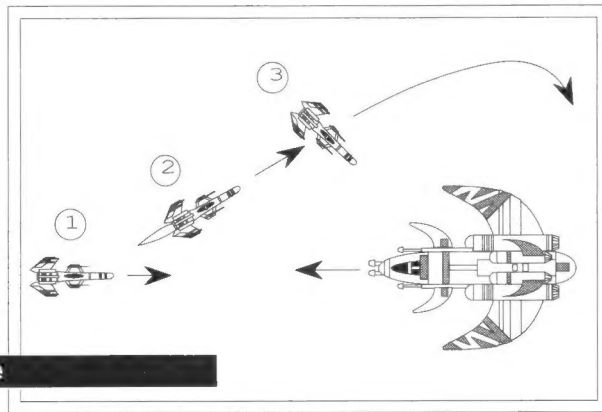
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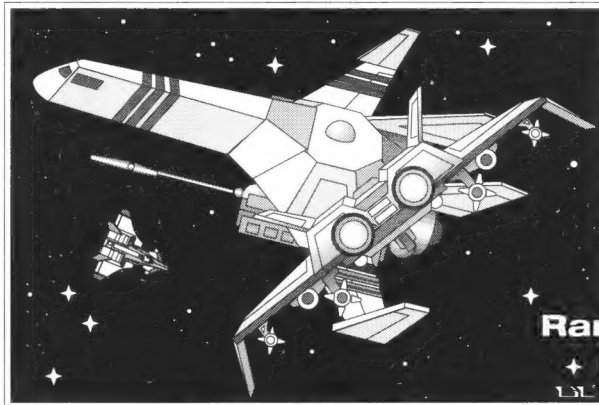
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